

STATE

state.gov/statemag
July/August 2013

MAGAZINE

Bicycle Ambassadors

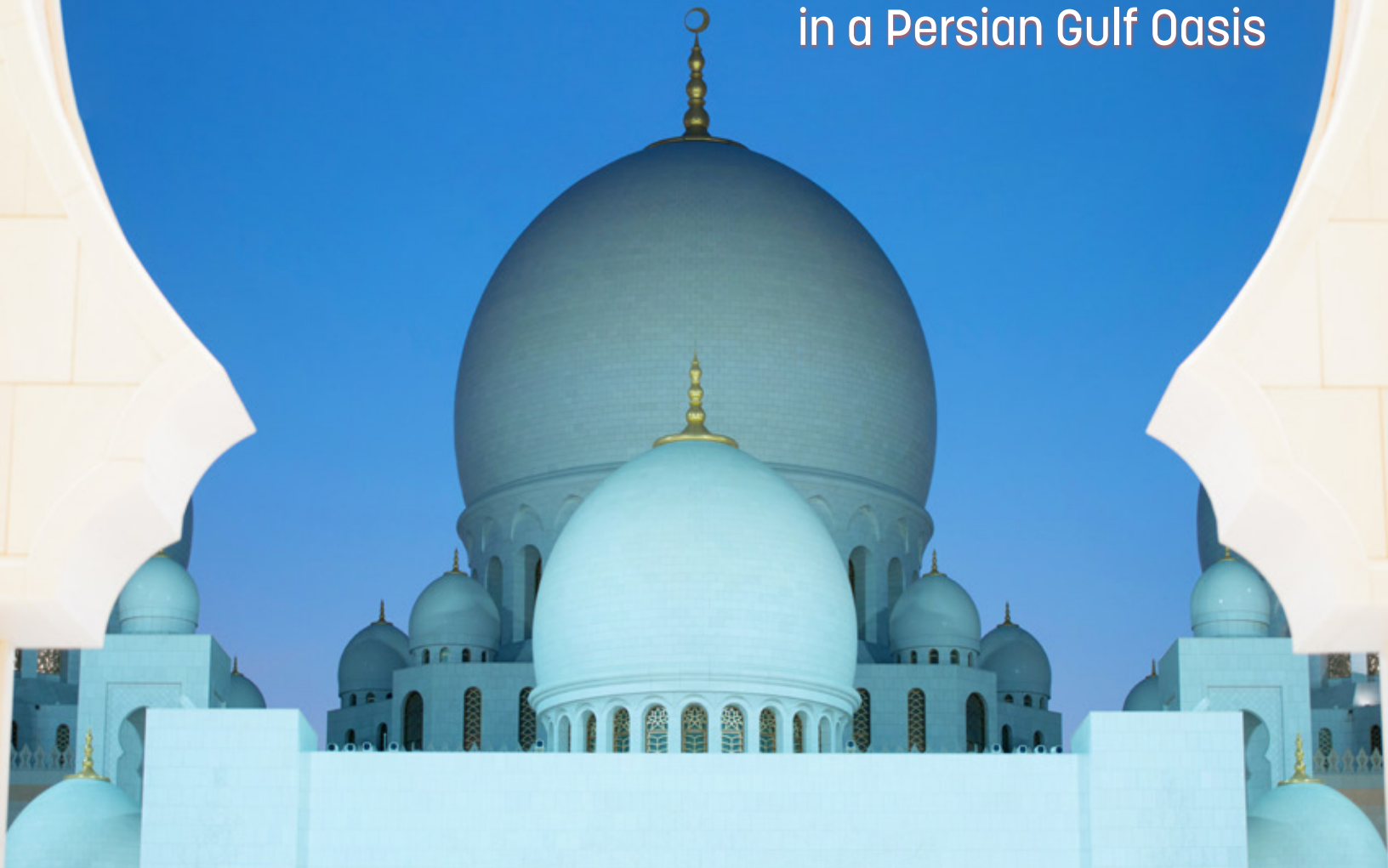
Cross-border Riders Promote
Tourism and Conservation

Traveling Chefs

Culinary Diplomacy Wins
Hearts, Minds and Stomachs

Abu Dhabi

Building Partnerships
in a Persian Gulf Oasis



Contents

July/August 2013 // Issue Number 580

10

Hip-Hop Diplomacy

Embassy Bishkek uses
music for youth outreach



Innovative dance group iLuminate's
lighted suits were a hit with audiences
in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Photo by U.S. Embassy Bishkek



Features

- 12** **Cycling Ambassadors**
Ride promotes tourism, conservation
- 14** **Afghan PRT Closes**
Paktya partnership spurred progress
- 16** **Foreign Affairs Day**
Leaders honor fallen officers at event
- 18** **People Power**
Exchange program alumni build Pakistan
- 20** **Abu Dhabi**
Persian Gulf "pearl" a study in contrasts
- 28** **Chefs' Tour**
Culinary diplomacy delights Slovenes
- 30** **Action Planning**
LE Staff action plans lead to innovation
- 32** **Crisis Central**
Office coordinates disaster response

Columns

- 2** Post One
- 3** Inbox
- 4** In the News
- 8** Diversity Notes
- 9** Direct from the D.G.
- 34** Active Years
- 36** In Brief
- 40** Education & Training
- 41** Lying in State
- 42** Obituaries
- 44** End State

On the Cover

A Moorish-style marble archway frames the central domes of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi.

Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco

BY ISAAC D. PACHECO

Ex Nihilo

Of the many places a world traveler might visit in his or her lifetime, few can match the beauty and awe-inspiring wonder of the planet's immense sand deserts. Though accounting for only 7 percent of Earth's total land area, these austere desert regions spark the imagination like few other biomes, reminding us that like the fine dust blowing between their ever-shifting dunes, we are but grains of sand in an incomprehensibly larger universe.

The largest contiguous sand desert on the planet is the Rub' al Khali, which comprises the central and southern portions of the massive Arabian Desert. Here, as in other deserts around the globe, water is scarce, temperatures extreme and survival exceedingly difficult. The desert's name literally translates as "The Empty Quarter," an apt moniker considering how difficult it is to imagine any living creature calling this punishing environment home. Yet somehow, almost inexplicably, life not only manages to persevere, but to thrive.

Along its southeastern periphery the Rub' al Khali spills over from Saudi Arabia into the United Arab Emirates. Golden dunes, tinted sunset shades of red and orange thanks to their high feldspar content, define the Emirates' landscape. Here, the searing heat of the glaring midday sun gives way to chilly, inky darkness at night, with a celestial lightshow overhead. Move nearer to the country's Persian Gulf coast, however, and a strange flicker on the horizon begins to compete with the glow of the Milky Way.

In this sea of sand, the Emirati people



have built the world's preeminent oasis. The glimmering lights and dazzling glass towers that define Abu Dhabi's bustling city center spring up almost defiantly out of the lonely desert night, beckoning the weary traveler toward them like a distant mirage. Situated on a coastal island that only a century ago was a fishing village and trading outpost, this modern metropolis seems to defy logic, boasting large emerald swathes of irrigated land surrounded by futuristic towers, mega-malls and busy thoroughfares.

No country today better illustrates the "something from nothing" concept than the U.A.E., thanks in large part to the ongoing, fossil fuel-financed development in its two largest cities, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. While presiding over one of the world's top oil producers, Emirati leaders are looking to diversify the economy by using their financial resources to develop the business, transshipment and tourism sectors.

Read more (pg. 20) about how State Department employees at the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi and U.S. Consulate General in Dubai work with Emirati leaders to build upon a robust, four-decade partnership between the two nations. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Isaac D. Pacheco".

Corrections

June 2013, pg. 23 – The marathon photo at the top of the page was taken by the U.S. Embassy in Madrid's Deputy Chief of Mission Luis G. Moreno.

STATE MAGAZINE

Editor-in-Chief

Isaac D. Pacheco // pacheco2@state.gov

Deputy Editor

Ed Warner // warneres@state.gov

Associate Editor

Bill Palmer // palmerwr2@state.gov

Design & Layout

Chris S. Rose

Editorial Intern

Karen A. Reitman // reitanka@state.gov

Contacting Us

301 4th Street SW, Room 348
Washington DC 20547
statemagazine@state.gov
Phone: (202) 203-7115
Fax: (202) 203-7142

Change of Address

Send changes of addresses to our staff using the contact information above. Please include your previous mailing address.

Submissions

For details on submitting articles to *State Magazine*, request our guidelines by email at statemagazine@state.gov or download them from state.gov/statemag. *State Magazine* does not purchase freelance material.

Deadlines

The submission deadline for the October issue is August 15. The deadline for the November issue is September 15.

State Magazine (ISSN 1099-4165) is published monthly, except bimonthly in July and August, by the Bureau of Human Resources at the U.S. Department of State. It is intended for information only and is not authority for official action. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of State. The editorial team reserves the right to select and edit all materials for publication.

Follow Us Online



state.gov/statemag



facebook.com/statemagazine



@statemag



state.gov/rss/channels/statemag.xml



flickr.com/statemagazine

Inbox

@ Embassy Birth Raises Questions

As a retired Foreign Service officer with considerable consular experience, I was somewhat perplexed to read the story (May 2013, pg. 7) about the pregnant woman “waiting in the visa line at the U.S. Embassy in London” when, as the story goes, “The mother returned (after giving birth) to the embassy later to renew her son’s passport, the task that had first brought her there. She brought her new baby along for all to see.”

Why was she in the visa line to begin with? Was she a third-country national requiring a visa? A British national does not need a visa to visit the U.S. Was she an American citizen? And the new baby—did she have claim to U.S. nationality?

Another possible scenario: The son whose passport was renewed could have been born in the United States of third-country, non-British-national parents studying or on business in the U.S. The new baby might acquire British nationality, but not U.S.

In any event, the core of the story was a great event for which the embassy doctor and his helpers should be praised for their achievement above and beyond the call of duty.

Donald R. Tremblay
Foreign Service officer (Ret.)

Mr. Tremblay has certainly thought up most possible scenarios! And he happened to get it right. The post’s version of the article erroneously reported the mother was in the visa line. The mother, who is not a U.S. citizen, was at the embassy to renew the passport of her older child, who was born in the United States.

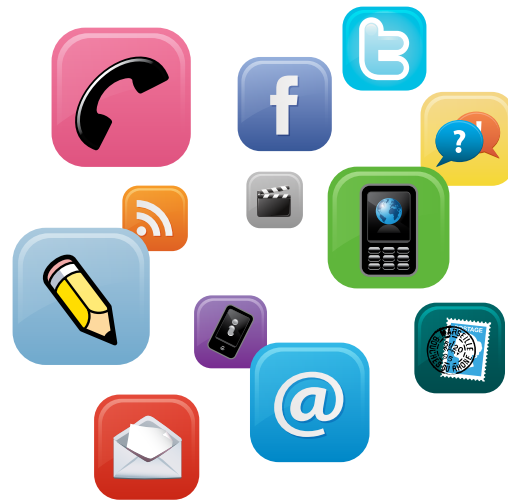
Mr. Tremblay is also correct in that, while the new baby might acquire U.K. citizenship (depending on the parents’ status in the U.K.), she will not acquire U.S. citizenship, which does not follow simply by being born within the embassy, and neither of her parents are U.S. citizens.

Catherine McSherry
Chief, Special Consular Services

@ Family Member Careers

Thank you for publishing the article “Success Secrets: Family Members Share Career Tips” in the May issue. Family member employment issues of course affect employees, and family members very much appreciate acknowledgment in *State Magazine* since we consider ourselves part of the diplomatic mission as well, especially overseas.

Patricia Linderman
AAFSW President



1974 Tandem Couple

Carol Rose and I were happy to see the nice article on tandem couples in the May issue. It brought back fond memories of how lucky we were to become the first tandem to enter the Foreign Service together, in 1974.

In late 1973 while on our honeymoon in Malawi, we happened to stop in the embassy there to register as U.S. citizens. We were pleasantly surprised (shocked, actually) to hear that a message had been sent to the nearby embassies that, if we happened to show up, the Department had scheduled us to take the oral exam in Pretoria, South Africa, about six weeks from that date. Since we were employed as high school teachers in Botswana and then Swaziland during that period, we were able to do the exam as scheduled. We both passed and eventually reported for A-100 training in September, 1974. We both enjoyed wonderful FS careers.

Peter S. Wood
Foreign Service officer (Ret.)

@ Tandems and Hardship Tours

In reading “Tandem Couples Balance Career, Family,” I found it quite telling that the example of a tandem couple (Weillers) successfully balancing career and family included their serving apart for three years in close succession, with tours in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. Most organizations would probably not deem this a victory for career and family balance. The State Department has a very long way to go before tandem bidding becomes more equitable. A good start would be telling potential tandems, before they join State Department, the truth about how difficult it will be to serve together, and the reality of how many hardship tours they will be expected to do back to back.

Nathan Carter
Economic officer and part of a tandem

Switching to Digital

You have an incredibly beautiful, thoughtful and enjoyable magazine. Thank you for all the work you have done for every issue. I truly enjoy receiving it each month.

I know the cost of printing such a great issue costs money, and although I will miss receiving it in hard copy, I am requesting that you send it via email to me from now on. Thank you again for the beautiful work.

Sheila Dumas
Leesburg, Fla.

In the News

Secretary Meets with Hispanic Employees

At a luncheon with 60 members of the Department's Hispanic Employees Council of Foreign Affairs Agencies (HECFAA) in April, Secretary of State John Kerry emphasized his personal commitment to the diversity of the State Department and said he would like to ensure that the Department be on the leading edge of Hispanic hiring rather than trail many other U.S. agencies.

The Secretary acknowledged that, despite active recruitment efforts, the percentage of Hispanics serving in the Department has not increased significantly. Ambassador Lino Gutierrez, who also spoke at the event, said that Hispanic representation was about 4 percent when he joined the Department – a number that did not grow appreciably during his 29-year career.

Now, 6 percent of employees are of Hispanic descent, according to the Bureau of Human Resources (HR). In fiscal 2012, 83 Hispanics were hired (32 Civil Service and 51 Foreign Service), and as of March 31 of the current fiscal year, 35 Hispanics were hired (17 Civil Service and 18 Foreign Service).

"The bottom line is, as proud as we are ... of the advances that we have, we still need to go further and everybody knows it," the Secretary said.

He encouraged HECFAA, the Department's Hispanic employees' affinity group, to continue working with HR on Hispanic recruitment, and urged increased mentoring of employees. Director General Linda Thomas-Greenfield noted that HR is reaching out to Hispanics before they attend university.

HECFAA, which has more than 250 Foreign Service and Civil Service members, works to recruit Hispanics through such organizations as the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and seeks to retain Hispanics and increase opportunities for them. Many HECFAA members informally mentor new employees and actively recruit Hispanic professionals and students. At the luncheon, HECFAA members encouraged the Secretary to link recruitment to employees' performance evaluations. HECFAA also sees a need for offering Hispanic employees broader career-enhancing assignments in Department offices and bureaus where their representation is low, and has called on members to take FSI's new course for volunteer recruiters.

HR is committed to improving the Department's record, and Hispanic outreach is prominent in HR's recruitment efforts. Both Washington-based recruiters and Diplomats in Residence (DIRs) engage candidates at the national and regional meetings of the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Hispanic National Bar Association and the National Society of Hispanic MBAs, and at career fairs hosted by Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. Seven of the 16 DIRs are based at HSIs and schools with high Hispanic enrollment (Florida International University, University of New Mexico, Arizona State University, University of California-Los Angeles, University of Texas, University of Houston and City College of New York).



Secretary of State Kerry addresses HECFAA members.
Photo by Edwin Giovanni Vizcardo Lazo

CG Guayaquil Promotes Legitimate U.S. Study

To support President Obama's 2011 initiative to boost U.S.–Latin American student exchanges to at least 100,000 in each direction, the consular and public affairs sections at the U.S. Consulate General in Guayaquil recently partnered to facilitate legitimate university student travel to study in the United States.

Fraud Prevention Manager Jacqueline Mourot and Public Affairs Officer Mark Kendrick jointly designed university orientation tours that began in February and focus on universities having the potential to send more students for U.S. study. The effort aims to familiarize visa adjudication officers with local universities and the student applicant pool, establish contacts with university officials and foster relationships between Ecuadorian and U.S. universities.

The two-hour tours include a guided campus visit, a meeting with the university president and relevant department heads, and discussions with students who have studied in the United States. The first two tours took place earlier this year at Guayaquil's main private universities, and two more are scheduled for the summer to major public universities. Consulate vice consuls have met with 23 Ecuadorian university students and 14 university administrators.

These contacts have helped the fraud prevention unit to confirm legitimate student travelers and adjudicating officers to gain firsthand knowledge of the universities that send the highest numbers of student visa applicants, helping ensure accuracy and efficiency in visa decisions.

"After meeting with university representatives and students, I am much more confident adjudicating student visa applications," said Vice Consul Merideth Manella. "I now have a better understanding of where



Foreign Service officers meet with UEES President, Dr. Carlos Ortega Maldonado, center, in his office. Photo by Christian Verdaguer

the students are coming from, and that is a great help."

Vice Consul Alexandra Shema said a highlight was one university's hospitality: Students from its School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy surprised the visiting consular officers with samples of their culinary expertise. "It was the best food I've tasted in Guayaquil," she remarked, "and it was exciting to experience the level of talent of Ecuadorian students seeking to study in the United States."

Representatives of the participating universities say they now feel more confident encouraging students to pursue U.S. study, and the consulate general hopes its outreach will result in more student visa applications.

Mission Fights Arsenic Poisoning in South Asia

Mission India has launched a private-public initiative to use the latest technology to remove arsenic from drinking water supplies, a project that will initially assist approximately 150,000 people in eastern India.

In 2000, the World Health Organization called arsenic-contaminated drinking water "the largest mass poisoning of a population in history"



EST Officer Nilesch Shah, standing, moderates the creation of the final action plan during the Rural Drinking Water Roundtable meeting. Photo courtesy of Nilesch Shah

and estimated that more than 100 million people worldwide drink water contaminated by hazardous levels of arsenic, mainly in South Asia. Multiple cancers, gangrene leading to loss of limbs and death can result, but if treated early, some ill effects can be mitigated.

Mission India's Environment, Science and Technology (EST) team convened experts on the latest nanotechnology-based polymer-filtration methods. The event, attended by experts from 17 organizations, was called the "Rural Drinking Water Roundtable: Thirst for a Business Model."

The new technology uses electrolysis, which has been successfully tested on a small-scale to remove impurities from water. EST Chief Tim Neely called on those at the event "to combine this enormous pool of talents into concrete planning on how to improve the lives of the millions of rural Indians affected by arsenic-contaminated water." Nilesch Shah, the EST officer who convened the roundtable, said it was "symbolic of deep relations in science and technology between the two governments that results in on-the-ground results."

The interactive brainstorming sessions led to the development of an action plan based on two commercially viable business models. The group agreed on a district-wide deployment of the latest technology to at least 25-30 villages, with a February 2014 target date for the opening of the first water treatment plant. Most funding will be provided by the Indian government, but the U.S. Embassy will play a central role in bringing in U.S. technology providers, including the Lawrence-Berkeley National Laboratory. The project will involve financiers, business developers, engineering experts, water testing and delivery experts and local entrepreneurs.

News

INL Builds Domestic Partnerships

For the past three years, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has recruited state and local law enforcement officials, corrections officials, prosecutors and judges to contribute to its criminal justice assistance programs abroad through exchanges and training with foreign criminal justice professionals.

The latest effort on that score came in May, when Secretary of State John Kerry welcomed INL's newest partner, the Boston Police Department.

"There's a terrific mutual benefit that comes from this," he said. "The countries we work with gain in law enforcement ability and in rule of law, and U.S. agencies help build democracies and develop partnerships with foreign law enforcement that help keep America safe."

Also in May, INL hosted events for public and private-sector partners. Its inaugural Partner Appreciation Ceremony recognized the many criminal justice professionals already working with the Department.

New York City Police Commissioner Raymond A. Kelly accepted the first-ever Secretary's Award for Excellence in Overseas Criminal Justice Assistance, for NYPD's police training assistance to the Haiti National Police. Since 2010, 68 Creole-speaking NYPD police officers have traveled to Haiti to train and mentor Haitian counterparts, promoting rule of law and improving capacities in areas such as patrol and investigations.

INL then hosted more than 200 private-sector representatives for the first annual INL Partnership Forum, where innovative, cost-effective approaches to citizen security were discussed.

INL Assistant Secretary William R. Brownfield also unveiled a new memorial to honor 86 personnel who died while supporting bureau missions. The memorial



Assistant Secretary Brownfield shakes hands with Maryland State Trooper Henry Doll in front of the Memorial Wall.

State Department photo

commemorates INL advisors, including police, corrections and support/logistics staff, and government and contract employees who lost their lives between 1989 and 2012. Families of the fallen attended the ceremony.

Embassy Dublin Conference Promotes Trade

The U.S. Embassy in Dublin's two-day forum "Driving the Future: The Importance of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)" in April highlighted newly announced U.S.-European Union trade negotiations to a broad audience. The more than 500 participants included U.S. and EU officials, business representatives, subject matter experts, civil society representatives, members of the diplomatic community and economic leaders.

Speakers included Deputy National

Security Advisor for International Economics Michael Froman, U.S. Ambassador to the EU William Kennard, Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny, EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht and Irish Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Richard Bruton. Representatives from U.S. and EU businesses participated in panel discussions. The event made clear that a U.S.-EU agreement allowing freer trade will spur jobs and economic growth. The forum, which coincided with an informal trade ministerial conference, featured side events organized by European and American business associations where U.S. officials made

their case for TTIP. To reach the broadest audience, the embassy held two separate, complementary one-day events. The first targeted government and business executives; the second focused on new economic leaders such as entrepreneurs, young professionals, students and subject matter experts.

"We knew that having every European Union trade minister in Dublin would be a great opportunity to publicly reinforce the message that the United States is committed to our growing and deepening our transatlantic partnership," said Political and Economic Section Chief Mark Erickson.

This was the embassy's fourth annual economic conference, and all embassy sections contributed to it. "Economic statecraft is an all-mission effort," Chargé d'Affaires John Hennessey-Niland said. "It involves both trade advocacy and public diplomacy to reach new audiences with messages that advance greater economic freedom and opportunity." He called the embassy team "a model of teamwork, professionalism and efficiency," and said his in-box was flooded with positive feedback from the event. A video of the event is available on the embassy's website, dublin.usembassy.gov.



Participants in the event included, from left: Taoiseach Enda Kenny, Embassy Dublin Chargé d'Affaires John Hennessey-Niland, RT News personality Aine Lawlor and Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman.

Photo by Diarmaid Keane

Toronto Consulate Creates Outreach Visa Video

Toronto's population is estimated to be evenly split between those born in Canada and those born elsewhere, making for a visa interview pool comprised of 170 nationalities speaking 140 languages. To reach the many applicants who speak little or no English, the U.S. Consulate General in Toronto produced a nonimmigrant visa (NIV) video for Mission Canada to introduce the public to the visa process, portraying it as easy and doable, and the staff as respectful and friendly.

The video is in English, but staff from Department posts across Canada translated the script into several languages, including the nation's top four, Mandarin, Hindi, Tagalog and Farsi, and provided voiceover narration. The Mandarin and Spanish versions have been posted, and other language versions are in the recording and sound editing stages.

The video explains how to avoid common mistakes in the online application process, indicates how to pay the fee, describes the standards for the required photo, shows an applicant using an interpreter, details items to be left at home and highlights visa pick-up procedures from the courier service. The video has been viewed more than 25,000 times in its first four months.

The video depicts a Canadian resident applying

for his first visa, for a U.S. road trip with his sister. Graphics of the road trip represent milestones in the NIV process. The culturally sensitive script was written by second-tour Foreign Service officer Ineke Stoneham, currently in the NIV Unit; she also managed the production process with Public Affairs and Consular section supervision. Interns starred as the three main characters; consulate staff and family members played all other roles and served as extras.

Targeting the post's largest applicant pool, Mandarin-speaking NIV officer JP Lai launched a Mandarin language visa blog that contains the Mandarin version of the video, three television interviews that Lai did with the local multilingual broadcasting channel and a Mandarin Web chat based on common questions from Chinese chat rooms. The consulate's website has a general consular information sheet in English and seven other languages.

The outreach, which aims to encourage U.S. tourism, was done by the post's staff with no additional expense. After making the video a reality, Mission Canada has turned to Mission Brazil for a Portuguese translation.



From left, Video Director Ineke Stoneham has worked with JP Lai, Pat Vomvas, and Magy Hanna (seated) on sound recordings in Mandarin, Spanish and Arabic.

Photo by Patricia L. Fietz

PD Association Names 2013 Award Winners

In May, the Public Diplomacy Alumni Association (PDAA) announced its 2013 award winners, citing their outstanding achievements in Pakistan, Algeria and Korea.

The association cited the public affairs section (PAS) of the U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar, Pakistan, for "dedication, courage, creativity, perseverance and unbending professionalism, under challenging and often dangerous circumstances, in building long-lasting ties between the people of Pakistan and the people of the United States."

PDAA said the PAS expanded its outreach, promoted grants programs and other exchanges, cultivated relationships with local journalists, expanded the consulate's social media reach and used music diplomacy to deliver strategic messages. The awardees are Public Diplomacy Officer Shayna Cram, Public Affairs Specialist Saif Ullah, Public Affairs Assistant Salman Wahab, Information Assistant Shahbano Durrani, Information Resource Center Assistant Zeeshan Khan, DRS and Social Media Assistant Saqib Jan and English Language Program Assistant Fakhar Fakhruddin.

Another award went to Tashawna Bethea of the public affairs office at the U.S. Embassy in Algiers for "exemplary leadership, creativity and professionalism in furthering key Embassy policy objectives by using the full range of PD tools exchanges, English language programs, the Information Resource Center and social media—to broaden relationships between the people of Algeria and the people of the United States."

The third award went to Nini Forino of the public affairs office at the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong for her work as public diplomacy officer for Korean Affairs and as coordinator for U.S.

participation in a Korean Expo. She was cited for "professionalism and dedication ... demonstrating leadership, creativity and perseverance in harnessing public and private resources to ensure a vital and impressive U.S. presence at the Expo in Korea." She managed U.S. participation, organized fundraising efforts, selected student ambassadors to staff the pavilion and led the interagency working group on messaging, PDAA said.

PDAA is a volunteer, nonprofit organization open to current and former State Department and USIA employees and public diplomacy professionals from the public, academic and private sectors. The group seeks to foster understanding of, recognition of and support for public diplomacy through educational and social activities.



Award winners include, from left, Shahbano Durrani, information assistant; Saif Ullah, public affairs specialist; Shayna Cram, public diplomacy officer; Saqib Jan, DRS & social media assistant; Fakhar Fakhruddin, English language program assistant; and Salman Wahab, public affairs assistant.

Photo courtesy of PDAA

Diversity Notes

JOHN M. ROBINSON
OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Myers Briggs Type Indicator Has Workplace Relevance

The Office of Civil Rights (S/OCR) receives hundreds of complaints of discrimination every year, but not all involve violations of civil rights. Even those that do not involve civil rights violations can involve very real conflicts that weigh heavily on the hearts and minds of complainants. Although they might not involve illegal discrimination, these conflict situations, which are nonetheless troubling, divisive and disruptive, are a product of SOMETHING. A personality test called the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is one effective management tool that can diagnose dysfunctional workplace conflicts to the extent that they result from differences in communication styles.

We all have different personalities and preferred ways of decision making that govern our office behaviors. The MBTI is a tool successfully used in the public and private sectors, in education and counseling, to determine how personal “preferences” affect the way we approach our work and also how we communicate and interact. Understanding our own preferences and those of others reduces the probability of antagonisms and speculation about unsavory motives that generally arise from nothing more serious than communication style differences.

The MBTI, which is based on Jungian personality theory, uses a series of questions, refined through research, to identify an individual’s

communication style among four categories: 1) extrovert or introvert, 2) sensing or intuitive, 3) thinker or feeler and 4) judger or perceiver. The sum of these preferences creates one of 16 MBTI “types,” which identify where we focus our attention, how we renew our energy and make decisions and what our optimum learning style is. In short, our MBTI profile describes how we deal with the outer world.

How do these communication differences affect the work environment? For example, extroverts absorb information through conversation and are invigorated by dialogue. Introverts, on the other hand, tend to prefer writing or telephone conversations (if necessary) and love email! They prefer to reflect and compose responses before answering, a preference that does not lend itself well to having a supervisor ask a direct question in person and expect an immediate response. Consider this example: Your extrovert supervisor summons you, an introvert, into his office for an update on a report. You present him with a precise and well-crafted written status report, complete with charts, graphs and citations. He replies impatiently that he has no time to read it, and instead wants you to give him a verbal description of where things stand. You comply uncomfortably in a low-toned voice in fewer than three sentences. When the director asks for more detail and asks specific questions, you become



flustered. The boss is left wondering why you can write a fantastic report but cannot give him a five-minute oral summary, and you return to your cubicle feeling you have been subjected to an interrogation.

MBTI training can teach each of us how to facilitate communication by understanding our own preferences and how other’s different preferences dictate their behavior in the professional environment.

Using the MBTI assessment as an organizational tool can lessen a stressful work environment and lead to more productive teams. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) administers the MBTI as part of its leadership classes. We in S/OCR thank FSI for giving our entire staff the MBTI assessment and conducting training on the instrument’s results. Some of us in S/OCR even post our types proudly on our doors ... at least the extroverts do. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Robinson".

Direct from the D.G.

LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD
DIRECTOR GENERAL

A New Approach to the New Diplomacy

Like all successful organizations, the State Department must adapt to the realities of the 21st Century. This requires a new mindset.

The global environment has changed over the past two decades, and the world has become more dangerous and interconnected. As such, our approach toward our workforce also must evolve. Diplomacy today requires flexibility and creativity in deploying the talents of all of our people to ensure success in an ever more complex mission.

Over the last four years, we made notable progress in increased hiring under the Diplomacy 3.0 initiative, augmenting Foreign Service positions by 21 percent and Civil Service positions by 9 percent. However, our mission has also multiplied. We are continuing to expand our responsibilities overseas, including embassies in three new countries: Timor-Leste, South Sudan and Kosovo. Operations at high-threat posts are increasingly demanding. We have added three new bureaus—Energy, Counterterrorism, and Conflict and Stabilization Operations—to strengthen our expertise in critical areas.

Currently, the Bureau of Human Resources is focusing on filling priority posts—Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and now Yemen and Libya—while ensuring that major initiatives such as economic statecraft, food security, refugees, energy security, climate change and nuclear nonproliferation are staffed for success.

One thing is certain: To meet new challenges, we must fully tap the skills and experience of all of our employees, whether they are Civil Service, Foreign Service, Locally Employed Staff, Eligible Family Members, WAE, political appointees or of another

employment type. As Secretary of State Kerry has said, “Each component of our workforce brings a critical skill set and unique talents and we [must] work together as one cohesive and vibrant team.”

We are a “people” service. When I see a team working together to develop new solutions, I’m reminded that diversity of thought, culture, background and service are critical to providing the innovation we need in the 21st century.

To help fill the mid-level gaps that have resulted from the less-than-attrition hiring of the 1990s and to provide additional development opportunities, we are offering new opportunities for tenured Civil Service employees to participate in temporary duty and long-term assignments abroad. To that end, this year we made available under the Overseas Development Program 20 opportunities for Civil Service employees to serve overseas in Foreign Service positions. We hope to expand this in the future.

We have also expanded our use of limited non-career appointments (LNAs) to meet pressing visa adjudication needs in countries such as Brazil, China, Mexico and India. To help staff our consular section in those countries, we are hiring a number of already language-qualified consular adjudicators, to serve for up to five years. This will help us to increase international tourism, which in turn will help boost our economy.

If immigration reform passes, the number of immigrant visas will increase dramatically. Because the need will likely be temporary and we will not have positions at the mid to senior levels to support a typical Foreign Service career path, we are exploring



alternative employment models, such as LNAs, Civil Service rotations, family members and WAE annuitants to fill adjudication demands.

In addition, we have hired men and women temporarily into the Civil Service as “3161s” to work on specific projects in Iraq and Afghanistan. Though we do not expect these employees to remain with the Department for the entirety of their careers, we have benefited—and will continue to benefit—from their unique expertise.

Today’s diplomats are serving in more challenging posts than in the past. They are analyzing policy and shaping outcomes, running programs and helping foreign citizens to promote democracy, fight corruption, start businesses, improve healthcare and reform education. They are also involved more heavily in complex technical and scientific areas than ever, and are conscious of work-life balance issues.

Clearly, our diplomacy has changed, and so must we. ■

Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Hip-Hop is Tops

Embassy Bishkek uses music for youth outreach

By Robin Solomon, assistant public affairs officer, U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

With American hip-hop music, dance and culture having spread worldwide, the public affairs section (PAS) at the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek decided hip-hop was the perfect medium to help promote understanding among youth in Kyrgyzstan, where violence flared three years ago between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek youth in the nation's southern regions, and tensions remain.

As nearly half of the republic's population is between ages 14 and 34, PAS saw hip-hop as a way to rebuild ethnic youth relationships and promote understanding, tolerance, leadership, community activism and empowerment. Hip-hop is one of the most popular music styles across the republic, where street culture is an essential part of youth identity, and hip-hop artists can become role models offering a positive message to vulnerable youth.

Starting with a series of cultural programs, the post has for two years partnered with hip-hop artists in public diplomacy, building relationships with young singers, dancers and artists

in the country's growing hip-hop community, and engaging with new young audiences. These young hip-hop artists may not yet study English or seek to connect with the embassy, but America features in their lives as they listen to hip-hop music, perfect their break dancing and emulate the popular images of American hip-hop street culture.

In 2012, the post hosted a rapper, a hip-hop dancer and a performer of popping, a type of street dance that arose in the African American community during the 1960s and is based on quickly contracting and relaxing muscles to cause a jerk in the dancer's body. This year, the post hosted American hip-hop artist, dancer and choreographer Emilio "Buddha Stretch" Austin Jr., who visited through the U.S. Speaker and Specialist Program of the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP). Buddha Stretch, a popular hip-hop dancer from the 1980s and 1990s who did choreography for global pop superstars such as Michael Jackson and Mariah Carey, connected with thousands of youth in Bishkek and Osh during a 10-day program.



Buddha Stretch presented hip-hop in the context of the history of African-American street dance dating to the 1930s. He also explained the origins of hip-hop street “battles”—dance, graffiti and rap—as an outgrowth of African-American New Yorkers’ fatigue with gang violence in the 1970s and 1980s. In doing so, he encouraged local audiences to use dance and other healthy forms of self-expression to resolve conflicts.

Following a series of master classes and presentations in Bishkek and Osh, Buddha Stretch led local youths in two hip-hop dance “battles” that showcased local talent and illustrated the genre’s potential as a tool of conflict resolution. In the Bishkek battle, hundreds of young dancers and an audience of all ages crowded into every vantage point of a three-story shopping mall to watch the five-hour battle. Dancers from Kazakhstan battled with local dancers in the day-long event where congratulatory hugs followed each battle and a diverse crowd shouted encouragement.

Gender equality was part of hip-hop’s origins, Buddha Stretch said, and in the dance battles in Bishkek and Osh, young women battled young men up to the final rounds, earning praise from Buddha Stretch and the crowds. Also, a number of hip-hop dancers with disabilities challenged able-bodied dancers in the hip-hop battles’ final rounds.

Afterward, at a reception hosted by Ambassador Pamela Spratlen for the hip-hop dance community, a local group of wheelchair-bound break-dancers impressed the crowd with their strength and skill.

PAS, with support from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs’ Arts Envoy program, also arranged a visit by one of the most innovative new dance groups in the United States, iLuminate, which also toured neighboring posts in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

iLuminate uses lighted suits with software-controlled cues, producing the effect of choreographed costumes accompanying the dancers as they engage in ballet, modern dance, hip-hop, break dancing and popping.

Audiences packed concert halls in Bishkek and Karakol for iLuminate’s three performances. Updates on the embassy’s Facebook page about iLuminate went viral almost instantly among local audiences, with individual posts reaching upward of 8,000 people each within a few hours. Fans praised the embassy for inviting such a dynamic dance group, and



Above: Buddha Stretch takes time to snap a photo with a fan.

Below: Buddha Stretch joins Ambassador Pamela L. Spratlen and a local wheelchair-bound break dancing group at the ambassador’s residence.

Photos by U.S. Embassy Bishkek



Opposite: iLuminate dancers light up the stage. *Photo courtesy of iLuminate*

Above: iLuminate dancer Trevor Harrison teaches break dancing at a mall.

Below: Buddha Stretch teaches children hip-hop dance moves.

Photos by U.S. Embassy Bishkek



one fan tweeted that the performance made her “brain explode.” In the days afterward, #iLuminate was a trending topic among local Twitter and Facebook audiences.

iLuminate also held packed master classes on hip-hop, popping and break dancing, boosting the embassy’s youth credentials and developing its contacts among the country’s elite hip-hop dancers, including a 15-year-old popper of international acclaim who opened iLuminate’s shows in Bishkek.

Like Buddha Stretch, iLuminate effectively communicated key mission messages, such as promoting healthy lifestyles and positive youth engagement. Its performance with the local wheelchair-bound breakdancers highlighted the talents of young people with disabilities. The group also promoted entrepreneurship and innovation: iLuminate founder Miral Kotb, a choreographer and computer engineer, spoke with student audiences in Bishkek about being an entrepreneur, inventor and innovator.

Kotb challenged the students to think beyond conventional definitions of talent and ability, noting how she merged her passion for dance with her career as a computer programmer. The awed young attendees, women in particular, found her nontraditional experience inspiring.

By using hip-hop, Embassy Bishkek has found a way to speak to youth on such mission priorities as tolerance and conflict resolution. Its successful hip-hop diplomacy program is likely to become a strategic element of public diplomacy programming well into the future. ■



Biking Across Borders

In Africa, U.S. ambassadors bike for tourism

By Priscilla Hernandez, public affairs officer, U.S. Embassy in Lusaka, Zambia

Against the backdrop of one of the largest waterfalls in the world, the U.S. ambassadors to Zambia and Zimbabwe, Mark C. Storella and Bruce Wharton, respectively, bicycled across the Victoria Falls Bridge with an entourage of followers May 21-23 in the first-ever Bike Across Borders outreach activity.

The ambassadors and their biking delegations were promoting the coming August General Assembly meeting of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to boost economic growth, good governance and sustainable wildlife conservation.

“We wanted to shine the light on both sides of the Zambezi River in advance of the UNWTO Assembly to encourage Americans to come and explore this part of the world and emphasize the connection between conservation, tourism and economic development,” said Ambassador Wharton during a press conference in Victoria Falls.

Tourism, one of the great drivers of economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa, contributed \$94.3 billion to the region’s economy in 2012 and is expected to increase its share of the region’s GDP over the next 10 years, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. More than 2.22 million international tourists—one-third of them American—are expected in Zimbabwe next year, and most will spend at least a day at Victoria Falls. Zambia surpassed 1 million visitors in 2012, and Americans were the largest single nationality among them.

The Zambian government has identified tourism as a strategic growth industry, offering tax incentives to businesses and designating

the city of Livingstone as Zambia’s “tourism capital.”

Zimbabwe and Zambia will co-host the 20th UNWTO General Assembly August 24-29 in Victoria Falls and Livingstone, only the second time for Africa to host the event.

During his bike ride, Ambassador Storella said he saw how “both sides of the border face the same challenges and the same opportunities. I was gratified to see the two governments, two private sectors, and even two sets of young people collaborating for an international congress that highlights the value of economic diversification, private investment through tourism and job creation, particularly for women and young people.”

The delegation of cyclists included Miss USA Nana Meriwether, Zambian Minister of Tourism and Arts Sylvia Masebo, Zambian Youth Ambassadors Humphrey Mwila and Luyando Haangala, and a young Zimbabwean comedian and Zimbabwean radio DJ who each have big social media followings. The youth leaders and press engaged social media followers on both sides of the Zambezi River with play-by-play postings, tweets, radio announcements and wide news coverage.

Sharon Hudson-Dean, public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Harare, noted the importance of including Zimbabwean youth celebrities in the delegation. “In the Zimbabwe media environment, where state media are actively anti-American, we aggressively use social media to engage and inform young people,” she said. She added that the comedian, his manager and the radio DJ “focused on the ‘real life’



aspect of our program, tweeting about the people we met and the great things they are doing for their communities in the Vic Falls area. Their daily updates on a variety of social media platforms gave a big boost to the programs and organizations we highlighted.”

Sixty-five percent of Zimbabwe’s population is age 35 or younger, and the country has 97 percent mobile phone penetration and wide social media access via mobile phones. Most Zimbabwean youth closely follow Facebook and other popular social media sites.

In Zambia, 75 percent of the population is under age 35, and 71 percent of the population use their mobile devices to listen to the radio, highlighting the potential for outreach to young people through a variety of mixed media channels.

Meriwether, a champion volleyball player, not only cycled with the group but led a volleyball clinic for young people on one stopover and dominated play at an exhibition game that highlighted the need for a healthy workforce. To engage young people in conservation and cultural arts, the youth ambassadors entertained at site visits with a song they authored for Bike Across Borders that warned of how inaction would place the land at risk.

“What a shame it would be to just sit back and lose it all,” goes the song, “when it’s just another story for the children when we’re gone.”

The cyclists visited U.S.-supported sites where exchange program alumni work in tourism, as well as a museum, cultural village and wildlife park, and national parks on both sides of the border. They learned about conservation efforts, including caring for endangered vultures, and met with disabled handicraft makers and local entrepreneurs in Livingstone and Victoria Falls.

As for the ride’s security, Mission Lusaka Regional Security Officer Kory Hammond said the post’s excellent relationship with local police meant “I knew I could count on their support, and I was impressed with the level of escort support they provided.”

Ambassador Storella’s radio interviews in advance of the ride prompted Livingstone-area residents to grab bikes, don helmets and ride along with the delegation. “When you are on a bicycle, you are closer to the people,” said the ambassador, a cycling enthusiast. “Dozens of Zambians spontaneously joined us on our bike rides through town, from officials to high school students.”

To support local business, Ambassador Wharton cycled on a Zimbabwean-assembled bicycle called the Buffalo. “It’s a very simple bicycle, very strong and beautiful,” he said, adding he was “happy to ride the sort of bicycle the Zimbabwean people have been riding for decades.”

Sometimes the delegation members got off their bikes, such as when they went on a snare-clearing walk through a national park on the Zimbabwe side with the Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Unit (VFAPU). VFAPU, a 14-year-old partnership between the tourism industry, National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and Zimbabwe Republic Police, fights wildlife poaching and emphasizes sustainable development, education and community involvement. So far, it has removed 22,000 snares used to trap wildlife and has arrested more than 600 serious poachers. U.S. embassies throughout sub-Saharan Africa, including those in Harare and Lusaka, are working with African authorities to build effective, integrated approaches to wildlife conservation.

During the trip, local officials pledged to continue efforts to preserve natural resources and promote their cultural arts. Masebo said the visit to Livingstone by the ambassadors and Miss USA will assist the two countries in marketing Victoria Falls as a world-class tourist destination before the UNWTO General Assembly.

As Patricia Mwale, deputy mayor of Victoria Falls, put it, “We are geared up more than ever before because one thing we know after this event is that Victoria Falls will never be the same again.” ■

Above: Road workers cheer cyclists led by Ambassador Wharton, second from left, and Ambassador Storella, right.

Right: Under the rainbow of Victoria Falls, diplomats of embassies Lusaka and Harare are joined by cycling guests Miss USA Nana Meriwether, white cap; Zambian Minister of Tourism and Arts Sylvia Masebo, dark cap; Zambian Youth Ambassadors and other celebrities.
Photos by Chando Mapoma



At the closing ceremony of PRT Paktya, Ambassador Stephen G. McFarland, left, told attendees that “this PRT did its job and now the provincial and national government can carry out the task that the PRT was doing. This is success.”
Photo by U.S. Embassy Kabul



First PRT in Afghanistan Closes

By Stephen A. Verrecchia, senior civilian representative, Provincial Reconstruction Team Paktya

At dusk on April 3, the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Paktya lowered the American flag for the final time, marking the closure, after a decade of operation, of the first American PRT in Afghanistan.

A deactivation event earlier in the day brought together U.S. military leaders, the province's governor and Ambassador Stephen G. McFarland, coordinating director for Rule of Law and Law Enforcement at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, to honor Afghans and Americans who died supporting the PRT. Also on hand were senior provincial officials, deputy governors and representatives from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, the media and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The PRTs trace their origins to the coalition humanitarian liaison cells established by U.S. military forces during Operation Enduring Freedom in early 2002. A dozen Army Civil Affairs (CA) soldiers from the 96th CA Battalion staffed these small teams, nicknamed “Chiclets,” which assessed humanitarian

needs, implemented small-scale reconstruction projects and established relations with UNAMA and nongovernmental organizations in the field. Later that year, the U.S. Central Command and Department of State expanded the Chiclets into Joint Regional Teams (JRT), incorporating U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and State Department civilian professionals. Afghan President Hamid Karzai, hoping the JRTs would help extend the reach of the central government, suggested “provincial” instead of “regional,” and the name PRT was born.

What became PRT Paktya was established in a Pashtun-majority, mountainous province in southeastern Afghanistan bordering Pakistan on Jan. 15, 2003. Then called PRT Gardez, after the provincial capital, the team was located at an old fortress. There were no dining facilities, and everyone used pumped water in the courtyard to bathe and wash clothes. The PRT was co-located with members of U.S. Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha, and the 450th CA Battalion provided daily contact with local

officials and tribal leaders. The PRT had only two civilian employees, one each from the State Department and USAID.

In the early years, the PRT was responsible for helping prevent the return of Taliban rule in Paktya, Paktika, Khost, Ghazni and Logar provinces. A better future for all Afghans would have to come not just by more fighting, but by bringing together all instruments of government power.

Over time, shortfalls in this approach were addressed. For instance, it quickly became obvious that an economy based on agriculture would require unique capabilities. So, three U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) experts joined this and other PRTs in 2003. In 2008, the military's Agribusiness Development Teams (ADT) joined with Gardez and other PRTs throughout the country. An ADT from the Tennessee National Guard joined PRT Gardez, which nearly doubled in size to approximately 200 members and was renamed PRT Paktya.

The PRT improved lives in Paktya and was a catalyst for more PRTs throughout

Afghanistan; by late 2003, there were PRTs in 26 provinces. As the program took off, the United States began to hand over some of these operations to its Coalition allies. PRT Paktya also served as the model for the 32 PRTs in Iraq. During its 10-year history, PRT Paktya partnered with the province's tribal leaders and government officials to improve the lives of local citizens. It invested more than \$282 million in approximately 527 projects in the areas of governance, development and agriculture. The number of clinics increased from zero during Taliban rule to more than 38 today. The number of schools jumped from 24 to 518, and more than 27,000 students at these facilities are girls (none were allowed to attend back in 2001). PRT-funded roads help connect villages to Gardez and beyond, allowing provincial and national officials to meet and better communicate with their citizens, and stimulating economic growth.

No measure of success is more pervasive than the booming economy. In 2001, the Gardez market had only 300 shops in a small area connected by unpaved roads. Today, the market is six times longer and boasts more than 6,000 shops on high-quality asphalt roads designed and built by Afghans with support from the PRT. Even during the coldest winter months, the market is bustling due to the abundance of fruits and vegetables delivered there from throughout the area. This change took time and a total effort by the whole PRT, including the ADT, USDA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CA and others in concert with Afghan partners.

The success of the partnership between the PRT and Paktya's tribal and government leaders did not come without a price. The Taliban's number-one target was often the PRT, since both it and the Taliban were fighting for legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Numerous government officials, interpreters, military personnel and Afghans endured countless threats and attacks. Some died, including two U.S. soldiers who were killed in 2008 when an improvised explosive device was detonated by a PRT convoy in Zormat. Many Afghans were injured. While this attack and others were tragic, they demonstrated the commitment of the PRT and Afghans, who dared to work together no matter how dangerous and difficult the mission.

Looking back over the past 10 years, Paktya officials and tribal leaders have every right to be proud of their accomplishments with the PRT. Afghans labored tirelessly to lay out a path for future growth and create a more effective government that recognizes the importance of transparency, rule of law and women's rights. ISAF and Afghan security forces fought to build a secure environment that facilitates and encourages these gains. This local effort reflects the progress made throughout Afghanistan, where gross domestic product has grown from \$4 billion in 2001-2003 to \$17 billion in 2011-2012, and 8.4 million boys and girls are attending school today, helping to ensure a sufficiently skilled work force to keep the provincial and national economies growing. ■



Top: Ambassador McFarland chats with Paktya's Provincial Governor Juma Khan Hamdard.

Middle: Afghan officials watch the closing ceremony.

Above: From left, U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel John C. Chong, PRT commander; U.S. Air Force Major General Harry D. Polumbo Jr., Commander, 9th Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force, Afghanistan; and Ambassador McFarland stand at attention.

Photos by U.S. Embassy Kabul



AFSA Memorial plaque ceremony honors eight; Secretary's Speech Highlights Foreign Affairs Day 2013

By Bill Palmer, associate editor, *State Magazine*

It was a mix of homecoming, somber memorial and new partnerships when 400 Department of State retirees swarmed the halls and briefing rooms of Main State on Foreign Affairs Day May 3 to catch up with old friends, stay current on U.S. diplomacy and, as one put it, “see the new team.”

Convening in the Dean Acheson Auditorium, they first heard from some of the Department's veteran leaders, Director General Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Deputy Secretary William J. Burns, Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy and Under Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman. Next, Secretary of State John Kerry, the son of a Foreign Service officer who grew up at posts overseas, welcomed them back and told them, “I have never seen the plethora of challenges that we're seeing today” in a world in which “nothing is simple.” For example, he said, “Syria is as complicated as any issue I have seen.”

Secretary Kerry then moved over to the C Street lobby where he was joined by Vice President Joe Biden and other dignitaries at the American Foreign Service Association's Memorial Plaque Ceremony, which honored eight men and women who lost their lives in conflicts old and new. In Afghanistan, Kerry had met

Anne Smedinghoff, who served as a control officer on his visit to Kabul just two weeks before she was killed. “I remember her face—her permanent smile—cutting through the chaos and the crowd,” he said. “That's exactly where Anne wanted to be, right in the thick of it.”

From his Senate days, Kerry said he knew Ambassador Chris Stevens, who died in last year's terrorist attack on the U.S. diplomatic complex in Benghazi. He recalled Stevens' skills as a diplomat and said, “Everyone felt like he was a personal friend.” Sean Smith, Glen Doherty and Ty Woods also died in Benghazi. Kerry noted that Smith “was the first to volunteer for Haiti after the earthquake, the first to volunteer for Japan after the Fukushima disaster. And so, of course, he stepped up to serve in Benghazi.” As for Doherty and Woods, “thanks to their bravery and their sacrifice, 30 Americans escaped the attack,” he said.

The other names added to the memorial plaque were: Ragaei Said Abdelfattah, a USAID officer who died in Afghanistan while pursuing what Kerry called “his deep passion for helping people develop their full potential,” and Joseph Fandino and Francis Savage, who both died in Vietnam more than 40 years ago.



Left: Director General of the Foreign Service Linda Thomas-Greenfield presents the Foreign Service Cup certificate to W. Robert Pearson. *State Department Photo*

Top Right: Vice President Biden and Secretary of State Kerry listen to AFSA President Susan Johnson at the Memorial Plaque Ceremony. *Photo by Donna Ayerst, AFSA*

Center Right: Pamela Dragovich, who before retirement was an information resources officer covering Central Asia from Vienna, Austria, said she was so busy then that she had no time for that city's great opera scene. Last posted to Berlin, she lives on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. *Photo by Ed Warner*

Bottom Right: Foreign Affairs Day concluded with a luncheon in the Benjamin Franklin Room featuring keynote speaker Ambassador James F. Jeffrey. *State Department Photo*



Vice President Biden and Secretary Kerry praised the courage and patriotism of the fallen, as well as the sacrifices of their families.

At a ceremony earlier, DACOR President Paul Cleveland presented DACOR's Foreign Service Cup to retired Ambassador Alan Larson, the first economic officer so honored. Larson said "economic statecraft is seen as a core part of U.S. diplomacy today." His remarks were echoed by Secretary Kerry, who said "so much of foreign policy is really economic policy" and called for harnessing the private sector to lower the unemployment rate and raise the gross domestic product in Arab Spring countries.

"We have to provide opportunity," he said. "We have to leverage."

After attending breakout seminars on consular affairs, public diplomacy and regional issues, many retirees reconvened for lunch in the Benjamin Franklin Room, where DG Thomas-Greenfield presented the Director General's Cups. The Civil Service Cup was awarded to Janice S. Clements, who was cited for "41 years of exemplary service and contributions to building a State Department that reflects the quality and diversity of our nation." The DG called her "a great mentor" who encouraged young people to develop their potential. The Foreign Service Cup went to W. Robert Pearson for an "exceptional career" that included service as ambassador to Turkey and director general of the Foreign Service. The DG praised him as a man of action and an innovator.

Luncheon speaker James F. Jeffrey, ambassador to Turkey and Iraq before retiring in 2012, discussed what went right and wrong in the Iraq conflict and the role of the Foreign Service there, and offered lessons for the future.

Attendees then returned to their busy lives, as exemplified—to cite just one example—by Wayne Sharp, who retired in 1991 and has since served as a board member or president of an orchestra, a foreign affairs retiree group, a hospital, a homeowners association and the National Council for Adoption, all while pursuing a second career until 2009 as a certified financial planner. As Pearson said when receiving his award, "As Foreign Service officers, we can't retire. A commitment to service marks our lives from beginning to end." ■



Exchange Alumni Build a Better Pakistan

By Jennifer McAndrew, assistant cultural affairs officer, U.S. Embassy in Islamabad

While a firefighter in Peshawar, a professor in Punjab and an activist in Islamabad may seem to have little in common, they are united in all being alumni of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs and members of the Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN). With more than 12,000 registered members, this alumni network is one of the largest and most active in the world, according to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

“Our alumni network is full of young leaders who not only want to keep close ties to the United States, but also want to make a difference back home,” Ambassador Richard Olson said. “They play an integral role in supporting the embassy’s goals of capacity building and countering extremist voices in Pakistan.”

The Department invests more in exchange programs in Pakistan than in any other country (\$40 million annually), sending thousands of Pakistanis to the United States each year on such programs as student scholarships and professional partnerships. To take full advantage of this investment, Mission Pakistan has a vigorous alumni engagement program to organize and energize thousands of young Pakistanis to contribute to their communities and maintain a long-term relationship with the American people.

The result: a burgeoning alumni network with 11 chapters spanning the country from the sands of Balochistan to the snowy peaks of Baltistan.

Veteran Pakistani exchange alumni launched PUAN in 2008. Since then, Mission Pakistan has helped the network evolve and expand, with the goal of building upon the shared values of Pakistanis and Americans to promote trust and understanding. In 2012, the embassy launched a five-year alumni engagement plan to further expand networking, funded by a \$3.1 million cooperative agreement with the U.S. Educational Foundation in Pakistan.

PUAN chapters sponsor regular activities, including leadership workshops, technology seminars, community service projects, mentor programs, environmental awareness campaigns, networking events and even the occasional “flash mob,” a seemingly spontaneous gathering in a public space, usually organized via social media.

Alumni from Lahore’s PUAN chapter choreographed a Bhangra dance flash mob at Alamgiri Gate to celebrate Pakistan Day in March. In the country’s mountainous north, alumni from the Gilgit-Baltistan chapter led an expedition to Deosai National Park to promote environmental sustainability and eco-tourism. In conservative Peshawar,



Fulbright alumna Sarah Adeel hangs out with street children participating in the LettuceBee Kids art outreach program in Islamabad.

Photo by Jabbar Bangash

alumni recently taught 28 women politicians how to run successful election campaigns.

The embassy also partners with alumni to build its other outreach and public diplomacy programs. Alumni regularly speak about their U.S. experiences on television and radio shows, in newspaper interviews and on panel discussions with hundreds of high school students. To help spread awareness of the mission's undergraduate exchange program, Islamabad alumni toured hard-to-reach northern Pakistan, visiting more than 20 schools and explaining how welcoming they found Americans. Alumni musicians performed at the mission's Daniel Pearl World Music Days concerts, starred in a play focusing on women's rights on International Women's Day, adopted the American Corner in Peshawar and led roundtable discussions about civil rights with a visiting American expert.

PUAN also hosts alumni reunions and conferences featuring American speakers to channel enthusiasm for improving Pakistan and helps alumni maintain ties to the United States. In April, about 450 alumni from Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and the United States convened in Islamabad for PUAN's inaugural International Young Alumni Conference, focusing on social entrepreneurship.

The conference marked the launch of the embassy's \$1 million Alumni Small Grant competition that will fund up to 50 alumni community service projects every year for the next five years. During the conference, alumni formed teams to brainstorm project ideas they will turn into grant proposals.

"Nearly every member of our alumni network has a unique story about how his or her exchange experience has enabled them to positively contribute to Pakistan's development," noted Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer Laura Brown, who manages the alumni program.

One example of how the alumni are changing their nation comes from Peshawar, near the Afghan border, where civil unrest often sparks violent demonstrations. Until 2010, Peshawar did not have formalized emergency services.

Exchange alumnus Wasim Khan decided to fix that.

"Back in 2008, Peshawar was in a very bad state," Kahn said. "There were bomb blasts, fires and emergencies all the time. This became my inspiration to study firefighting in the United States."

As a 2009 exchange student in the Community College Initiative Program, Khan enrolled in firefighting courses at St. Louis (Mo.) Community College and interned with the local fire department, gaining hands-on experience with new firefighting techniques.

On returning home, Khan joined the PUAN Peshawar chapter and went to work for the city's newly established Rescue 1122 emergency service. As an incident commander, he now leads emergency preparedness programs in hospitals and schools, and trains cadets on conducting rescue operations.

"My message is, go to work for your country and advocate for more education," Khan said. "That's the only way we can transform Pakistan into a safer, more peaceful society."

Another example of how alumni are improving Pakistan is that of Islamabad-based activist Sarah Adeel, a 2009 Fulbright alumna and graduate of Rhode Island School of Design. She took note of the fact that an estimated 1.2 million children are on the streets of Pakistan's major cities, according to the Asian Human Rights Commission. Many survive by scavenging at garbage dumps. Others resort to crime. Helping these kids reintegrate into society is what drives Adeel.

After returning to Pakistan, she founded the nonprofit organization



Ambassador Olson greets Global UGRAD exchange participants during a December pre-departure orientation in Islamabad. Photo by Rahat Yasmeen.

LettuceBee Kids (LBK), which uses art, music and mentorship to get children off the street. The idea for LBK came about when she was conducting research for her master's thesis on child welfare in South Asia.

"I was doing a comparative analysis of orphanages and foster-care homes, and these were some of the most abysmal places you could imagine," Adeel said. "I spent hours getting to know the children. One day, I asked them to write letters to whomever they missed the most, and most of the letters were addressed to God. When I saw them having nobody but God to write to, I knew I had to help."

With the aid of one of the embassy's first Alumni Small Grants, Adeel and LBK piloted an art therapy program in 2012, offering art classes to street kids at local parks and schools. The organization has transformed the children's artwork into a commercial greeting card line to sustain the program.

"We can't afford not to help these kids," Adeel said, "because they are Pakistan's future."

A third example is that of Dr. Yasmin Rufi, an assistant professor of political science at Islamia University of Bahawalpur and a 2005 International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) alumna. She motivated the PUAN Bahawalpur chapter to hold a series of free medical clinics to provide health services to women in Punjab's poorest areas.

Many women in Pakistan have limited access to medical care, especially in poor, rural areas where three-quarters of the country's population lives. As a result, Pakistan suffers from high rates of maternal and child mortality, according to the World Health Organization.

Rufi credits her IVLP experience with giving her the skills to make the clinics a success, particularly seminars she attended at the University of Maryland on youth mobilization and building trust in a community that might be suspicious of your intentions.

Many local leaders were at first resistant to the clinics, Rufi said, but the alumni were able to change their minds after meeting with them to address their concerns. Some of the women treated at the clinics told Rufi it was their first time to ever speak to a doctor.

"Many of these women are illiterate, so education is key to letting them know their rights," she continued.

These stories show how, in the words of Ambassador Olson, "exchange programs are one of our most important tools to counter prejudices and build trust between the United States and Pakistan.

"From the vocational student to the professor," he observed, "alumni improve our ability to build bridges across every sector of Pakistani society, and that's invaluable." ■



Post of the Month



Bathed in light during the evening call to prayer, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque serves as an open forum for the Emirati people and the broader Muslim community to worship and exchange ideas with people of differing faiths. The mosque is open to the public in an effort to demystify Islam and to bridge cultural divides.

Abu Dhabi

Business Partnerships Bolster Prosperous Bilateral Relationship

Story and photos by Isaac D. Pacheco





R

ising abruptly from the warm shallows of the Persian Gulf, Abu Dhabi's futuristic skyline glistens like a string of iridescent pearls along the northern coast of the

United Arab Emirates. Only a century ago, the spit of land where the U.A.E.'s capital city now rests was a humble trading outpost for nomadic Bedouins, some of whom relied on pearl fishing in the calm waters for their livelihoods.

The invention of cultured pearls in the early part of the 20th century led to a steep decline in demand for Gulf-region pearls, but the ensuing discovery of another much more valuable commodity beneath their feet opened new doors for the Emirati people. The small country sits atop the world's seventh largest oil and natural gas reserve. Today, the U.A.E. boasts the world's seventh highest GDP per capita. Accordingly, Emirati leaders have used their fossil fuel windfall to finance a massive and unparalleled infrastructure development project that continues to this day.

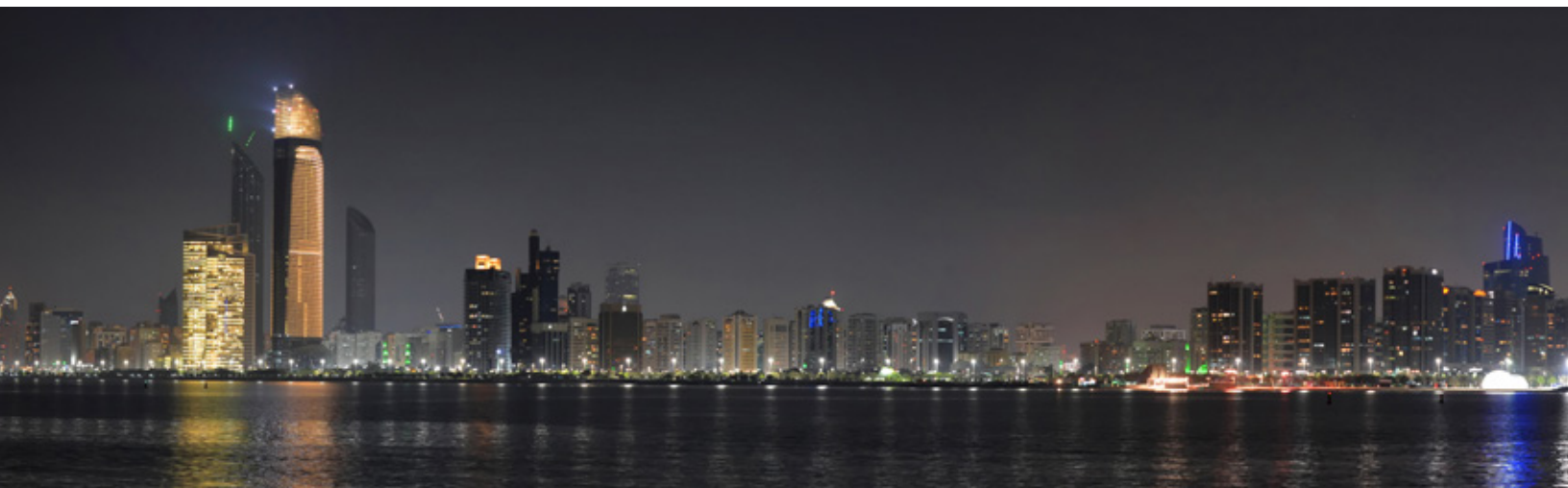
The Emirates' two largest cities, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, exemplify the country's dramatic growth over the past five decades. Since striking oil in the late 1950s, the nation has seen its coastline rapidly transformed into a modern oasis thanks to one of history's most incredible urban development projects. Skyscrapers and lush parks fed by millions of gallons of desalinated water now define a coastal landscape once dominated by scrub brush, date palms and shifting dunes.

If the U.A.E.'s major cities demonstrate the Emiratis' vision for the future, the country's largely undeveloped interior reflects its strong ties to the past.

"This is a very large, very cosmopolitan, very sophisticated urban setting, but Emirati culture itself is quite traditional, rather more conservative in some ways than one might expect to see in Abu Dhabi or Dubai, and really rooted in the heritage and culture of the seven individual emirates," said Robert Arbuckle, the public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi.



Clockwise from above: Originally a means for desert-dwelling Bedouin to supplement their diets with much-needed protein, falconry has become an expensive pastime and has spawned a lucrative industry. Abu Dhabi is home to the world's preeminent falcon hospital, where these valuable birds are taken for regular check-ups and treatment; U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry speaks to embassy staff during his visit to Abu Dhabi, March 4. *Photo by Dafne Johnson*; The city's modern skyline glows at night as seen in this panoramic shot taken from the Corniche.





Anyone seeking a Bedouin-style adventure need only wander several kilometers outside any major city to find it. The country's shared southern border with Saudi Arabia is dominated by the world's largest sand desert, the Rub' al Khali (Empty Quarter), considered by many climatologists to be one of the world's most unforgiving biomes.

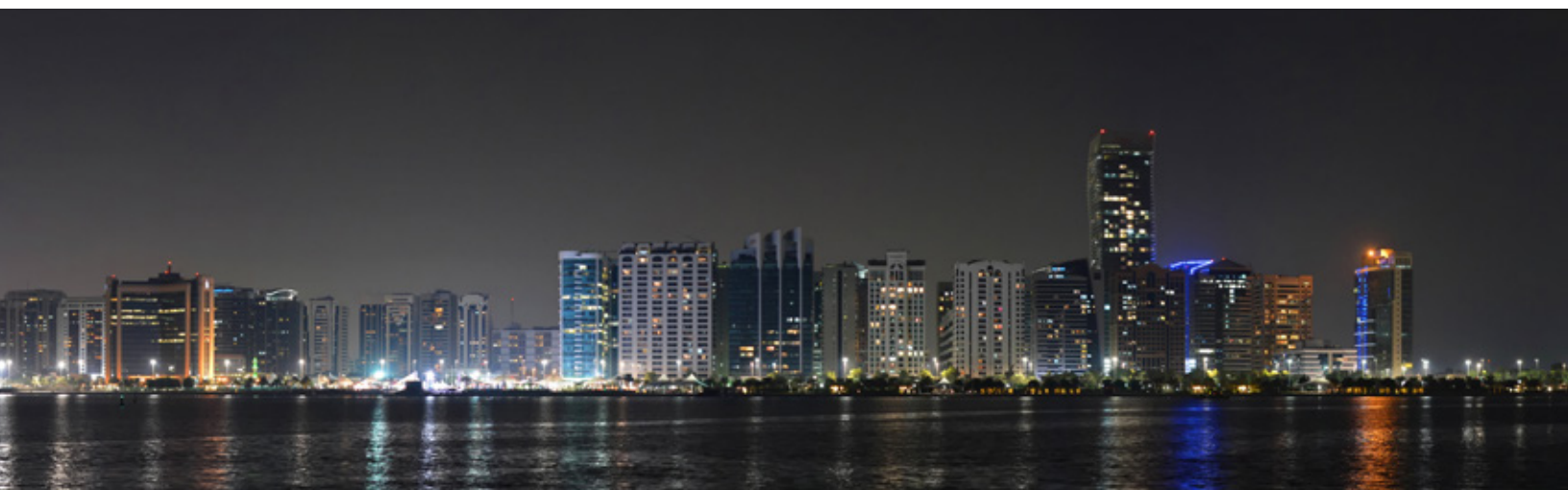
Over the years, the Bedouin learned to not only survive, but to thrive in this extreme environment, notably by using falcons to hunt small game. Their prized raptors helped supplement their diet with much-needed protein. While no longer practiced as a means of sustenance, falconry remains a popular pastime among the Emirati elite.

Even as this country of striking contrasts continues to experience almost daily reinvention, the United States works with the Emirati

people and leadership—as it has for 40 years—to capitalize on the U.A.E.'s role as a stabilizing influence in the Middle East.

“The United Arab Emirates is an island of stability, a crossroads, a visionary country in the Middle East with an enormously strong relationship with the United States,” said Ambassador to the U.A.E. Michael Corbin. “The United Arab Emirates is playing a key role way beyond its small size and population. It's a country that is open to the West and open to the U.S. But, it's a country with its own cultures and traditions. We can't take for granted its cooperation and friendship with us; we have to work to maintain it.”

Secretary of State John Kerry reinforced the importance of this relationship during his March 4 U.A.E. visit, which was part of his first official overseas tour. During remarks at the embassy, he



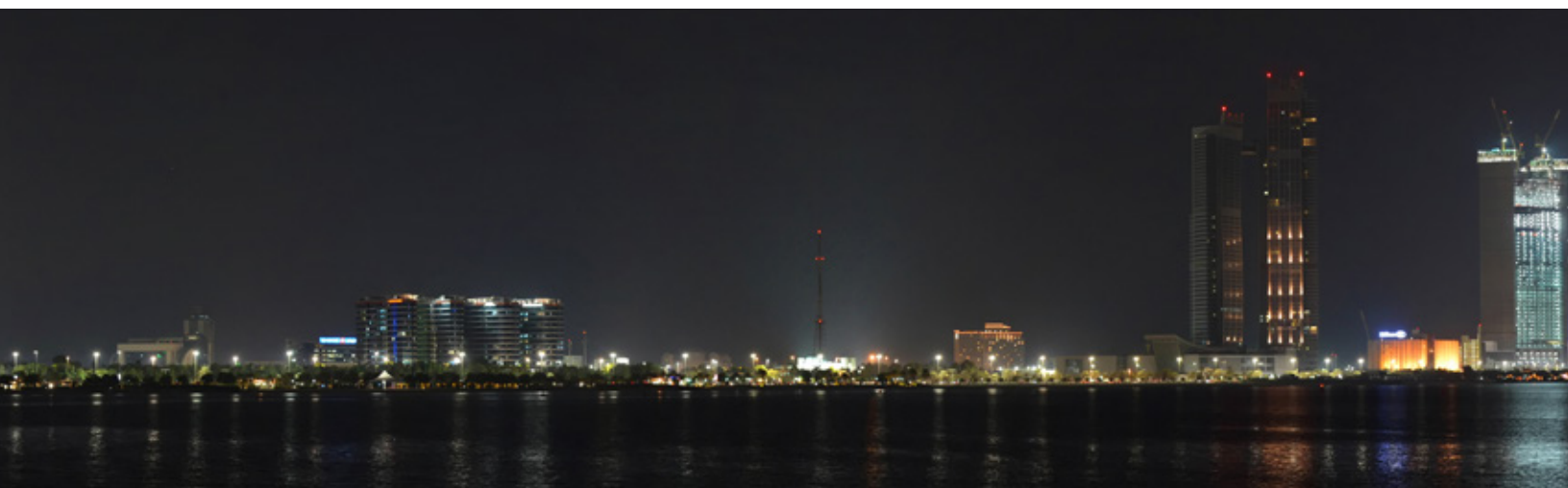


lauded the State Department team at post for its sustained contributions to a robust bilateral partnership.

One of the many ways in which the embassy connects with the Emirati people is through the public affairs section's social media campaigns. Ambassador Corbin is an active participant, engaging in discussions on the embassy's official Twitter and Facebook sites and on his own account (@AmbCorbin).

"We're definitely trying interesting, new, innovative ideas over our virtual platforms to get our message out," said embassy Information Officer Jeff Ladenson. "We use social media as an opportunity to promote our business interests and U.S.-U.A.E. trade relationship, because those are definitely key components of the bilateral relationship."

With more than 1,000 American firms maintaining a presence in the U.A.E., business and trade are major success stories in the burgeoning partnership between the United States and the Emirates. The U.A.E. is the United States' single largest



export market in the Middle East, with a trade surplus exceeding \$22.5 billion in 2012—the fourth straight year the country has held the distinction. These trade figures incorporate the U.A.E.’s role in regional trans-shipment, such as goods going from the United States to sub-Saharan Africa and Asia via Dubai.

“The ease of doing business here means that it’s a great place for U.S. companies to come and either have headquarters or partnerships or distribution networks,” said Corbin. “You have a real opportunity for us to share the things that we do best with this country that’s seeking to do the best things for themselves and for the region. Our best exports, higher education, medicine and business have a real partner here in the U.A.E. For State Department officers, and other agencies that are represented here, there are myriad opportunities to engage.”

The embassy’s team of Foreign Service employees and Locally Employed (LE) Staff works in cooperation with other government agencies to forward American policy priorities in the U.A.E., giving mission stakeholders a solid platform to build upon when engaging with their Emirati counterparts.

Deputy Chief of Mission L. Victor Hurtado described the embassy as a critically important training ground for a wide swath of issues that officers might face at some point in their careers.

“It’s an exciting place to be. If you’re a management officer, the challenges are just outstanding as far as building your skills and getting recognized for it,” he said. “It is a really challenging environment for management officers of all kinds, from HR to GSOs to financial management, because you’re managing growth. You’ve got to stay on top of it.”

While the demands of overseeing such a large embassy could easily overwhelm even seasoned officers, Management Counselor Jude E. DeBaere said that the unparalleled talent pool at post makes navigating even the most complex issues a rewarding experience.



Above: Ambassador Corbin welcomes Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nayhan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE Armed Forces to the U.S. Pavilion at the 2013 International Defence Exhibition and Conference (IDEX) in Abu Dhabi. *Photo by U.S. Embassy Abu Dhabi*

Opposite Top: As morning light spills over Abu Dhabi, commuters make their way along the main highway into the city center.

Opposite Center: A desert tour operator attired in traditional Bedouin garb rests against his camel as he waits for customers at a rest stop.

“I’ve never walked into an embassy where I’ve felt so confident in my American staff,” said DeBaere. “That has really relieved the pressure of running this embassy. I would take all of them with me anywhere, and I’m very serious about that; they are great.”

A veteran corps of LE Staff complements the Foreign Service team, bringing invaluable regional experience to the table as well as a critical understanding of local cultural mores.

“One of the things that makes Abu Dhabi particularly pleasant for the officers who work here is that we have some LE colleagues who have been here since the very beginning,” said Arbuckle. “Our senior cultural specialist has been here almost 30 years, and our senior information specialist more than 30 years—in a country that’s 40 years old. The depth of institutional memory we have is really strong.”

Of the many engagement opportunities available at the embassy and Consulate General Dubai, one of the most demanding is consular duty. In a consular section that sees more than 120 different nationalities in the average year, the LE Staff helps American officers overcome linguistic and cultural hurdles.

“Our immigrant visa section is a little unique in that the majority of our immigrant visa cases are nonresidents,” said Brian R. Peterson, deputy chief of the embassy’s consular section. “That makes our work a bit more challenging in that it’s hard to get into a routine when you just don’t know exactly who or what you’re going to see.”

“If you want a challenging job here, in terms of [American citizen services] and nonimmigrant visas [NIV], dealing with Iranians and Iranian visa issues, this is a great opportunity because of the increasing demand throughout the Gulf. It’s our biggest Iranian NIV issuing post, and here in Abu Dhabi we do the [immigrant visas] too,” he added.

Along with providing Foreign Service officers with numerous opportunities for career advancement, Abu Dhabi and Dubai also offer first-time visitors a refreshing perspective on life in the Middle East.



A woman scales a large sand dune on the outskirts of Abu Dhabi to capture a picture of the vibrant desert sunset. While the Emirates' coastline continues to see a boom in development and growth, the country's arid interior remains sparsely populated.



“The biggest misconception that the general public has, and I think the State Department a little bit less, is lumping the whole region together as one of political upset and security threats,” said Arbuckle. “That’s certainly not the everyday experience of living in Abu Dhabi or Dubai, where our biggest issues are traffic and heat. It is a safe, pleasant and mostly tranquil place to live.”

With two of the world’s most technologically advanced cities, both boasting high living standards and low crime rates, modern-day U.A.E. is dispelling stereotypes about the region and drawing in new residents. Safe communities, a plethora of recreational activities and top-tier educational systems in Abu Dhabi and Dubai have made the Emirates a particularly attractive destination for families.

“People are constantly amazed,” said Robert P. Waller, consul general at the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai. “For many of them, it’s their first trip ever to the Middle East, and they get here and they are just blown away by how modern and developed this place is, how great the infrastructure is, how warm and welcoming the locals are, how accepting and tolerant the society is; it really exceeds a lot of people’s expectations.”

DeBaere similarly encourages Department employees who have children, but are leery about serving in the Middle East, to consider bidding on an assignment in the U.A.E., which she described as “a harbor of stability in a region of unrest.”

“If you are interested in this region, and yet you have a family or kids ... come here,” she said. “You will find enough of the Arabic influence to really feel it. You can use your Arabic [language skills], you can get out, you can see it, and you also have a great place to have a family.”

As political and social landscapes continue to evolve in the Middle East, Embassy Abu Dhabi and Consulate General Dubai are working with the Emirati people to enhance an already stout bilateral partnership by building upon existing academic, business and military ties, and collaborating on policies that confront terrorism, open economic systems and support financial markets.

“It’s a really robust relationship. The Emiratis are very responsive in working with us. They’re positive and constructive in dealing with problems,” said Hurtado. “Our partnership is an increasingly important part of the Middle East equation.” ■



Post of the Month



At a Glance

United Arab Emirates

Capital: Abu Dhabi

Government type: federation with specified powers delegated to the U.A.E. federal government and other powers reserved to member emirates

Area: 83,600 sq. km.

Comparative area: slightly smaller than Maine

Population: 8.3 million

Languages: Arabic (official), Persian, English, Hindi, Urdu

Religions: Muslim

GDP per capita: \$49,000

Export partners: Japan, India, Iran, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore

Export commodities: crude oil, natural gas, dried fish, dates

Import commodities: machinery and transport equipment, chemicals, food

Import partners: India, China, U.S., Germany

Currency: Emirati dirhams (AED)

Internet country code: .ae

Source: The World Factbook



Cooks' Tour

Post wins hearts and minds, one bite at a time

By Christopher Wurst, public affairs officer, U.S. Embassy in Ljubljana, Slovenia

At the dinner table, people set aside differences, display traditions and share food, which not only nourishes, but reveals our differences, similarities and values in a language everyone can understand. America's diversity is reflected in regional and ethnic differences in food, so the public affairs section (PAS) at the U.S. Embassy in Ljubljana wanted to use food to highlight that diversity for Slovenes, while disproving the notion that Americans eat only fast food.

Agreeing with former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who said, "Food isn't traditionally seen as a diplomatic tool, but sharing a meal can help people transcend boundaries and build bridges in a way that nothing else can," the post responded to the Department's Culinary Partnership Initiative by organizing a culinary tour for two American chefs. It had already started a "food diplomacy" campaign that involves posting short videos online of embassy staff in their home kitchens making their favorite foods.

The regional American chefs, a man from the north and a woman from the south, are leaders in the field of local, farm-to-table, sustainably produced food. Lenny Russo, the chef/owner of Heartland Restaurant in St. Paul, Minn., is a four-time James Beard Award nominee, a member of the Nutrition Commission for the Minnesota Department of Health and an energetic defender of small farmers. Cassie Parsons, from Charlotte, N.C.'s Harvest Moon Grille, is a farmer and the 2012 U.S. Green Entrepreneur of the Year. Both have big, charming personalities, and are equally comfortable with

small farmers, eccentric winemakers and Michelin-rated chefs.

Taking advantage of a confluence of events—the new Department attention to food, POP-TV's recent success with food programming and its agreement to pay all production costs—the embassy was able to secure funding from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to allow the American chefs to travel as official Arts Envoys. They each spent two weeks in the country during the April wild garlic and black truffle season, one in the eastern half, one in the west.

The chefs' tour culminated with a highly-rated television series on Slovenia's most popular channel, POP-TV. The show, "Zabeljeno po ameriško" ("Seasoned by Americans") followed the chefs as they zigzagged through the Slovenian landscape, meeting farmers, other chefs, artisans and lots of hungry people, during which time they truly won over the Slovenes one dish at a time. But how would they fare among an opinionated group of Slovenian grandmothers?

Working with Felina Films, an award-winning production company, the post divided each of the country's halves into four distinct food regions. The American chefs traveled through postcard-perfect countryside, learned about and collected ingredients and discussed the ingredients' American equivalents. Each episode culminated with the American chef using these ingredients to create his or her own unique meal. All of the characters they met along the way came together around the table, always in some spectacular setting, to eat, drink and appreciate each other.



Clockwise from top left: Chef Cassie Parsons, in white jacket, poses with Ambassador Mussomeli, fourth from right, and other participants in a “Stump the Chef” reception at the ambassador’s residence; Photo by Sabina Dolenc. Parsons stops by a “cook off” where young Slovenes team up to prepare traditional dishes; Photo by Meaghan Monfort. Parsons gets behind the wheel of a tractor at Korenika Eko-Social Farm; Photo by Meaghan Monfort. Russo, left, cooks for his new friends in Gorenjska; Photo by Christopher Wurst.

Opposite: Chef Lenny Russo learned to make dumplings with these grandmothers in Rateče, where Slovenia, Austria and Italy come together. Photo by Christopher Wurst.

During Russo’s swing through the Istrian region, near the Adriatic coast, he raked salt at salt pans dating from Roman times, dug up a truffle (thanks to Slovenia’s famous truffle dog, Gina), sipped organic olive oil and walked a vineyard that overlooked the Bay of Trieste, Italy, and the port of Koper, Slovenia. And he welcomed Momo the fisherman, who on that day, for the first time in his life, reeled in a huge steelhead trout that had somehow wound up in the Bay of Piran. A few hours later on national TV, Russo expertly filleted and fried it over an open fire in a huge stone fireplace at a 200-year-old restaurant.

“My most fervent imaginings were far exceeded,” Russo said. “I found Slovenes to be not only gracious and overwhelmingly openhearted, but also incredibly sophisticated, stylish and creative. The beauty of Slovenia’s cities, towns and villages, and the astonishing vistas of the countryside were only exceeded by the charm and grace of its beautiful people.”

When not gathering or cooking food, he toured an old mercury mine; lost a bocce ball match to a spirited group of retirees; received a newborn goat in a tiny mountaintop village where Slovenia, Italy and Austria all come together; got rowed out to Bled Island by a Slovene Olympian; and took a perilous ride with members of the Yugo Car Club.

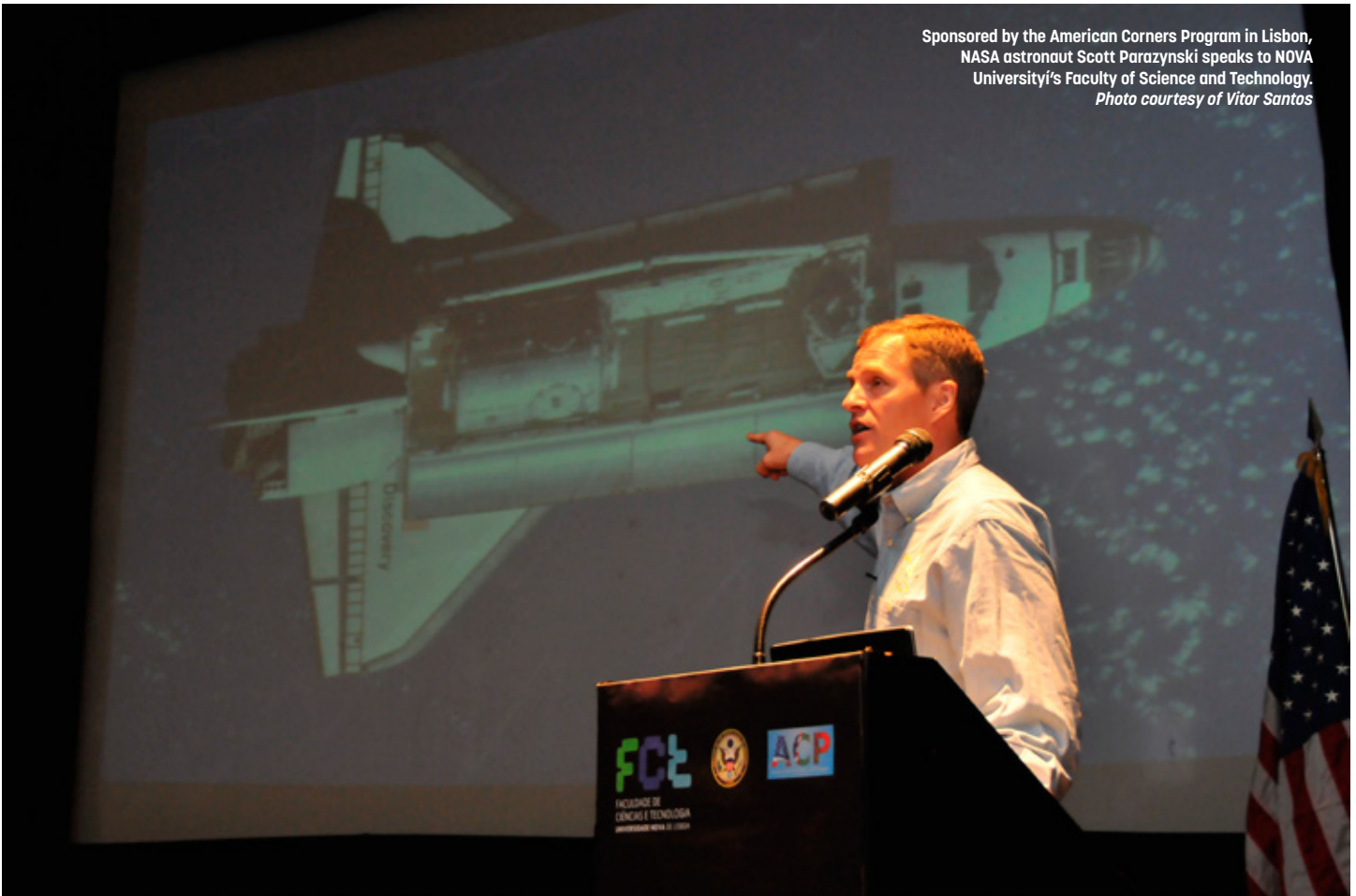
Not to be outdone, Parsons spun pottery, blew glass, rode a horse and tried her hand at fly fishing. Her food foray in the eastern part of the country was equally memorable. In her Prekmurje episode,

she drove a tractor; learned to make Gibanica, a traditional dessert, from a grandmother with 60 years of baking experience; visited an ecological farm; ground her own flour; and showed off her Polish-American heritage by making pierogies with local sour cabbage.

“Everywhere we went, we experienced incredible hospitality and rich traditions,” Parsons said. “Culinary creativity was everywhere. I was struck by the pride and passion of the people I met, who were so willing to share their homes and recipes with me.”

Russo oversaw an American tasting menu night in Ljubljana Castle, while Parsons did the same at a prestigious Ljubljana restaurant. The American chefs worked hand-in-hand with their Slovene counterparts and their teams. Ambassador Joseph Mussomeli hosted food-themed receptions for both chefs, where each was forced to blindly sample Slovene dishes and give their impressions to the guests, who had all been given the menu in advance.

As tens of thousands of Slovenians tuned in for eight weeks to “Zabeljeno po ameriško”—marking the greatest reach of any program ever done by the embassy there—they learned about America and Americans as two clever and enthusiastic chefs jumped headfirst into their culture. The chefs emerged with delectable dishes and gained a greater appreciation for the richness of Slovenian culture and cuisine. As Parsons put it, “Slovenia isn’t only in my belly, it is now firmly in my heart.” Many Slovenian viewers no doubt feel the same about America. ■



Heart of the Action

LE Staff Action Plans Lead to Innovations

By Wara Gillies, educational specialist, Regional Support Center, U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt

Action planning provides a means for staff to collaborate to solve problems and generate solutions. Locally Employed (LE) Staff supervisors learn of such planning in the Foreign Service National Supervisory Skills (RP248) course, where they identify a situation they would like to address and determine the needed steps to achieve the desired outcome. RP248 is an FSI course taught at the Regional Service Center in Frankfurt and at posts in the region of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. LE Staff members can apply for it on FSI's website.

An effective action plan specifies a goal, identifies the benefits of achieving the goal, acknowledges the barriers and determines the time and resource requirements. In the RP248 course, supervisors share their plans with colleagues from other posts and get their feedback.

Employees who actually carry out the work develop the action plans. These plans have resulted in initiatives such as implementing Merit Based Compensation (MBC), establishing an innovative model of the American Corners program and

developing an online resource for personal vehicles in Spain.

LE Staff member Lauma Uzija, human resources manager at the U.S. Embassy in Riga, Latvia, helped the embassy implement an MBC program in January 2012 based on an action plan developed one year prior. MBC, a performance management plan, provides an alternative to the within-grade pay-increase system by recognizing individual performance with rewards or salary increases.

Uzija credits the action planning segment of RP248 for the program's success, saying the segment made her "focus on the key factors of a planning process, such as time horizons, barriers and involvement of various parties." She said the implementers of MBC made adjustments as the plan evolved, "but we never lost the vision of every step coming together at the end.

"We faced the most common barrier associated with any change—resistance," she said. Most of the pushback came from employees with heavy workloads, different knowledge and experience levels, or not ready for additional responsibilities.



Top left: Lauma Uzija, human resources manager at the U.S. Embassy in Riga. *Photo by Sanita Sidorane*

Above left: Vitor Santos, IRC director at the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon. *Photo courtesy of Vitor Santos*

Above Right: U.S. Embassy in Madrid's Customs and Shipping Team, from left, Aurelio Sevillano, Maria Teresa Arenas, and Alan Stafko. *Photo courtesy of Aurelio Sevillano*

Support from the Frankfurt Regional Support Center staff and 100 percent participation of LE Staff and their supervisors helped the plan succeed, Uzija said.

As a result of MBC, overdue annual work plans were eliminated, as were late employee performance reports, a sure sign that the change has been accepted. The program ensures that performance monitoring and feedback is continuous throughout the rating year, and resulted in many supervisors focusing more on reviewing the quality of work and mutual feedback instead of just checking off deadlines.

Another LE Staff member involved in action planning is Aurelio Sevillano, customs and shipping supervisor at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid. The embassy used an action plan to develop an online “one-stop shop” for all questions related to privately owned vehicles called the Car Book. The Car Book uses a question-and-answer format to address such issues as importing and operating a car in Spain.

Many inbound mission staffers read the book, Sevillano said, and Customs & Shipping uses it as a reference, saving the section “quite a bit of time in answering routine questions.”

The online resource, he continued, also promotes dialogue with customers, clarifying procedures and preventing surprises. “When we started the action plan,” he said, “the idea was to provide information, but communication has flowed in both directions, benefiting the customer and service provider alike.”

Vitor Santos, director of the information resource center (IRC) at the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon worked on an action plan to use IRC resources to establish a network of American Corners (AC) within university communities. Portugal’s ACs are located exclusively within top-tier university libraries and cater to academic audiences, making them somewhat different from traditional ACs. The action plan aimed to provide ACs with access to U.S. commercial databases (through the eLibraryUSA), something most Portuguese academic libraries lack.

Now, the embassy has a network of ACs at such key Portuguese institutions as the University of Lisbon and the University of Porto.

During the past two years, the embassy and ACs have collaborated on programs on books and eBooks, media freedom and space exploration, the later involving NASA astronaut Scott Parazynski’s talk at NOVA University’s Faculty of Science and Technology.

Action planning is relevant to all supervisors seeking to implement continuous improvement. When LE Staff participate in the planning process, they develop ownership in the work and are motivated to carry it out and see the results. Action planning is not a magic wand, but it is a powerful tool for promoting improvement and collaboration. ■

Crisis Central

When disaster strikes, CMS is there to help

By Hayden Gnewikow, former intern, Office of Crisis Management Support

During a task force facilitated by the Operations Center's Office of Crisis Management Support (CMS), the epicenter of the Department's response to a crisis, the room is crowded and tensions are high, as tasking schedules cover whiteboards on the wall and televisions compete for the attention of personnel drafting situation reports and logs. During an eight-hour task force shift, one never knows if the next phone call will be from an under secretary, member of Congress or family member of a U.S. citizen stranded by a natural disaster.

CMS manages all Department and interagency crisis task forces, coordinates

embassy evacuations and trains Department officials in task force operations and contingency planning. CMS officers constantly monitor the world for emerging crises and collaborate with the Operations Center to keep Department leadership informed and prepared to respond. CMS works closely with Department officers worldwide before, during and after crises.

CMS helps the Department prepare for a crisis by following trends with the potential to harm private U.S. citizens, official personnel and facilities, and other U.S. interests. It encourages contingency planning to mitigate the consequences of

threats such as hurricanes, election-related civil unrest, terrorist acts or pandemics. CMS works with all the bureaus and other agencies to analyze events as they occur and plan for possible outcomes. It also coordinates meetings, sets up conference calls and creates email collectives to ensure that, in crises, bureaus focus on relevant threat and planning information.

To do so, CMS ensures an integrated response by bringing together representatives from the regional desks; senior Department officials; as well as Consular Affairs, Intelligence and Research, Diplomatic Security, Public Affairs and Political-Military



In the task force room, Operations Assistant Yanira Copley discusses a matter with Pickering Fellow Allison Carragher. Photo by Ed Warner

Affairs; post management officers; interagency colleagues; and others as necessary.

A critical element of how CMS prepares for a crisis is training domestic personnel to serve on a task force. A distance learning course (PD 440, available through FSI's online LearnCenter) allows trainees to absorb basic information about the structure, composition and logistics of a task force at their own pace. Once employees complete the online training, they attend an interactive, hands-on training in the task force room that gives them experience with the technological tools and methods CMS uses in a crisis, and a sense of the time pressure they would experience in an actual task force shift.

More than 1,000 personnel have registered for the distance learning course since its launch in December 2011, and more than 300 have completed the in-person training since it was revamped in October 2012.

In addition to training, CMS provides a wealth of resources on the OpenNet site crisis.state.gov, including cables, checklists, templates and timelines.

When a crisis begins, bureau leadership and the Executive Secretary may determine a task force is necessary, and, if so, CMS leaps into action. Bringing together key stakeholders from bureaus and agencies across Washington, a task force or monitoring group quickly becomes a 24/7 nerve center, facilitating evacuations and ensuring Department principals receive the information they need.

While many task forces are established in reaction to a crisis, CMS also anticipates turmoil by creating "shadow" task force rosters of on-call staff. It can also establish a monitoring group. More than 300 task forces and monitoring groups since 1982 have responded to natural disasters, terrorism, civil unrest, emergencies and policy shifts, not including the more than 100 connected to monitoring NASA-related events.

For example, in the past three years, monitoring groups have been established for Kenyan, Iranian and Afghan elections, and for the global protests that began on Sept.

11, 2012. A working group was formed to coordinate diplomatic responses to Wikileaks. Recent task forces have supported evacuations from Egypt, Libya, Central African Republic and several other posts. Since 2010, there have been task forces in response to earthquakes in Haiti, Chile and Japan.

When a crisis ends, CMS serves as the Department lead for identifying lessons learned. By bringing together those from affected posts with representatives from the bureaus that served on the task force, CMS collects best practices and after-action reports, which are shared with posts worldwide, so they can improve their own emergency preparedness.

The smaller half of the 52-year-old Operations Center, CMS has a shorter history than its sister office, the Watch. In 1976, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger ordered the Operations Center to assume responsibility for reaction to nonmilitary incidents such as asylum requests, hijackings and other acts of terrorism. In 1980, Secretary of State Edmund Muskie charged the Operations Center with planning the evacuation of U.S. citizens abroad in emergencies.

As CMS developed through the 1980s, its then-small task force area was renovated. Directors' offices, computers and telephone conferencing equipment were added. In 1995, Acting Secretary Strobe Talbott gave the Executive Secretariat the authority to review the arrangements made by bureaus



The Operations Center's Deputy Director for CMS, Micaela Schweitzer-Bluhm, meets with Operations Center Director Kent Logsdon.

Photo by Ed Warner

for emergencies, ensure overall coordination of the Department's response to crises and conduct interagency coordination of the Department's crisis management program.

In the late 1990s, CMS had only three officers; it now has a staff of 11, including a deputy director, coordinator, seven program officers, an office manager and a Bureau of Diplomatic Security advisor to the Operations Center.

All employees can help the Department prepare for and respond to crises, and the best place to start is at crisis.state.gov. Domestic employees can register for the task force distance learning course, then sign up for in-person training on the intranet and visit CMS offices to consult on the countries or issues in their portfolio.

Those preparing for overseas assignments can visit crisis.state.gov and review the F-77 Report, Emergency Action Plan and tripwires for their post on the intranet.

Employees can also bid for jobs in CMS, which has a mix of Foreign Service and Civil Service positions, Consular Affairs and Department of Defense detailees, Pickering Fellows, Presidential Management Fellows and other interns. For information, email SES-O_CMS@state.gov. ■



Everyone's Everest

Ex-ambassador's climb brings life lessons

Story and Photos by Sue M. Cobb, former U.S. ambassador to Jamaica

Before he perished on the very route I climbed on Mount Everest, the famous climber George Leigh Mallory said: "There is something in the human spirit that responds to the challenge of the mountains and goes to meet it." Mt. Everest was a challenge I never expected to encounter until I was invited to climb the 29,029-foot peak at a time when no woman from the United States had summited Everest—and I was 50 years old.

The year was 1988. I was living in Washington, D.C., having taken a leave of absence from my Miami law firm to accompany my husband, Charles Cobb, during his term as assistant secretary of Commerce under President Ronald Reagan. Chuck later became the U.S. ambassador to Iceland, and those three years in Reykjavik became the start of a much-valued 24-year association with the Department of State in which I moved from ambassador's spouse (1989-1992) to ambassador to Jamaica (2001-2005) and frequent co-chair of FSI's ambassadorial seminars (2002-2008). Chuck and I continue our involvement with the Department by sponsoring two annual awards.

In 1987, I spent two weeks in my beloved mountains in and around Telluride, Colo., climbing several 14,000-foot peaks and remembering the group I had climbed with on Aconcagua in the Andes. I knew they had obtained a Chinese government permit to climb Mt. Everest in the fall of 1988 on a route closed to American climbers for 60 years. I could not get the thought of joining them out of my mind.

Who wouldn't want to travel through China and Tibet and climb the highest mountain in the world? And do it without porters or oxygen?

The team with the permit was called "Cowboys on Everest," as its leaders, Courtney and Bob Skinner, were from Wyoming, and the climb was to celebrate the state's centennial. After

Aconcagua, the Skinners had invited me to go on the Everest trip, but I'd declined due to my legal job and my husband's D.C. responsibilities. But I kept in touch and participated in some of their training climbs. The climbs on McKinley, Aconcagua, Orizaba, Rainier and Gannet Peak helped harden team members to the harshest conditions possible, at least in the Western Hemisphere; test their expeditionary character; and emphasize teamwork.

The Cowboy team was composed of 30 men and five women of differing ages, backgrounds, educations, experiences and roles. In the end, I joined them. The Everest trip was a great adventure, though in traveling through Tibet during monsoon season we encountered unanticipated delays and unforeseen hazards, including monumental rains, landslides, earthquakes and enormous rock slides. Once, we were detained by members of the Chinese military.

The climb was potentially hazardous, too. We were told that there then was a 10 percent chance of dying on Everest. In fact, the historical trend on Everest to that point was that for every climber who made the summit, another died. On our ascent, sometimes at night, we managed to escape crevasses (deadly cracks in a glacier's surface), and survive frigid temperatures, hellacious winds, avalanches, altitude sickness and accidents. We avoided deadly falls and the critical errors in judgment caused by oxygen deprivation. Although 19 climbers died on Mt. Everest during our stay, all of the Cowboy climbers survived.

But that's getting ahead of our story.

It took three months and 13,000 miles to reach the 29,029-foot peak. From the beginning of the trip in July, I had kept fear out of my mind, since fear can be paralyzing. Then, on an October day as our team worked its way up the mountain, I

Opposite: Sue Cobb prepares for a day of climbing. Although her ascent of Mt. Everest was cut short, she has successfully summited numerous other peaks around the globe.

Right: A lonely climber ascends the North Ridge.

was feeling some degree of satisfaction—I'd crossed the most dangerous and daunting of the crevasses and was on the spine of the North Ridge—but I knew I was also becoming very weak. I did not know it then, but after almost eight grueling weeks spent above 17,000 feet, I had lost almost 25 percent of my usual 130-pound body weight.

The thought surfaced: "Am I going to get out of here alive?"

I was at an altitude of more than 25,000 feet, poised to ascend to the peak in the next two days. So, I forced that thought out of my mind and peeked down in complete awe at the scene that unfolded below me.

That afternoon, I descended from the North Ridge to the relative safety of our 24,000-foot camp and learned that a huge weather system was headed our way. Winds on the North Ridge exceeded 80 miles per hour. So, our team's leaders decided that all Cowboy climbers were to evacuate to lower levels immediately.

That decision undoubtedly saved several lives, including mine. A small Czechoslovakian team at about the same altitude on an adjacent ridge decided not to descend. When their tents were blown away that night, all four died.

We had been so very close to the top, weakened and frail, but hanging on. But with the storm at hand our climb was finished. I was depleted, exhausted and depressed as I rappelled down the sheer 2,000-foot face of the North Col and trudged far into the night across the last 15 miles of moraine to our 16,700-foot base camp.

We did not make a second try for the top. The fall climbing season on Everest was over, effectively ended by the arrival of the polar jet stream, which typically lingers at peak elevations until spring and halts climbing.

Furthermore, everyone was ill. On our last night at a high camp, my tent-mate and I had helped monitor two teammates who were coughing up blood. My eyes were completely red from popped veins, and my tent-mate later told me I was barely breathing during the night. In the morning, he thought I had died.

When I finally returned to our base, a



doctor said I had about four hours to live if I had remained at elevation.

So, no, I did not make it to the top, despite having been just 900 meters from my goal. Was I disappointed? Well, yes, but not as much as I thought I would be. To this day I am buoyed by the exhilaration I felt on that one October day on the North Ridge when I turned around and looked down at the scene below my boots and my heart soared. I saw literally hundreds of snow-covered peaks reaching far into Nepal and India on one side and into Tibet and China on the other side.

And for that one brief moment, I felt as if I were on top of the world.

Since those days, I have climbed many mountains, including in the Himalayas, but I always recall the biggest lesson I learned on the biggest mountain in the world: It's not, after all, about a peak; it's about the journey. It is about surrounding yourself with willing people and focusing on the opportunities ahead.

I am convinced that everyone has an Everest inside. It is in moving forward through life's struggles, reaching beyond our grasp, striving to go further than we ever thought possible that we find life's "peak" rewards. ■

Diplomatic Reception Rooms Event Honors Donors

Secretary of State John Kerry in May welcomed more than 200 guests to the Diplomatic Reception Rooms for a reception marking the Rooms' year of accomplishments and to honor the individuals who made financial gifts to support the Rooms.

Secretary Kerry thanked donors and called the Rooms "an American treasure." In 2012, the Rooms, which are entirely supported by donations, were the site of more than 800 events. "These rooms don't just house history, they host history in the making," said Secretary Kerry, noting their role as the site where treaties and partnerships were negotiated.

In October 2011, the Rooms successfully raised \$20 million to establish a permanent endowment to preserve them and their collection of Americana, and to support educational initiatives aimed at students,

teachers and the public.

"In the past, we didn't get to share these treasures with as much of the public as we would like, but with your help, we're starting to change that," Secretary Kerry said.

He noted that his predecessor, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in 2012 signed a document called the Declaration of Learning that formalized the U.S. commitment to work alongside 12 other government agencies and NGOs to develop innovative teaching tools that will use the Rooms and their collection to help bring history to life.

"Education and learning have the amazing power to bring people together and spark discussions," Secretary Kerry said. "One of our great statesmen—our first Secretary of



Secretary Kerry thanks donors during the Diplomatic Reception Rooms event. Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco

State, Thomas Jefferson—liked to talk about the power of education to unlock and explore the 'illimitable freedom of the human mind.'"

The Rooms' Curator and Director Marcee Craighill also offered her thanks to the donors. "We are so very grateful to the donors and to Secretary Kerry for their support of the Rooms and our educational initiative," she said. "Without you, none of this would be possible."

LED Lights Illuminate Embassy Warehouse

The U.S. Embassy in Helsinki, home of the League of Green Embassies, recently completed a \$46,000 warehouse LED lighting retrofit that will save an estimated \$10,000 per year in electricity and maintenance costs, paying for itself within five years and saving more than \$60,000 over 10 years (the minimum lifetime of the LED fixtures).

The project replaced 78,400-watt, high-pressure mercury vapor lighting fixtures with LED lights that consume only 20 watts in a low-light, low-power state and 109 watts at full brightness when activated by an onboard motion sensor.

The new LED lighting system's temperature range eliminates the fire and safety risks associated with high-pressure lamps, and will reduce Embassy Helsinki's CO2 emissions by approximately 40 metric tons, demonstrating the Department's commitment to address climate change. Lighting retrofits can be simple and inexpensive post-managed projects, the embassy said.

Ambassador Aids Hospital Fundraiser

U.S. Ambassador to Finland Bruce J. Oreck recently lent his muscle to a fundraiser organized by the popular Finnish social media movement 875 Gramma. The movement, begun by one of the embassy's former Locally Employed Staff members, is named for the weight of his premature baby, who is being kept alive through the use of an incubator. The fundraiser sought to secure money to buy another incubator for Helsinki's hospitals.

Through a hugely successful social media campaign, 875 Gramma garnered nationwide support and caught the attention of Ambassador Oreck, who himself was born prematurely and spent his first months in an incubator.

Ambassador Oreck, who became a competitive bodybuilder as an adult, visited the hospital and participated in a press event to draw attention to the fundraising effort. He praised 875 Gramma's use of modern forms of communication to raise awareness of the innovative technologies that can give even the smallest infant a chance at a healthy future.



Ambassador Oreck visits the premature baby who sparked the 875 Gramma movement. Photo by Tomi Takamaa

Posts' Earth Day Trees Celebrate Life

The U.S. Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela, used this year's Earth Day in April to celebrate the life of former colleague Anne Smedinghoff, who was killed in Afghanistan that month. The post planted a palm tree in front of the newly constructed Marine House on the embassy compound.

At the ceremony, Chargé d'Affaires Kelly Keiderling said Smedinghoff "represented all that is good in America. She never hesitated to help out her colleagues, to volunteer and support local charities, and to show the people of Venezuela just who Americans are." A plaque at the base of the tree notes that Smedinghoff served in Caracas from August 2010 to April 2012.

Meanwhile, at the U.S. Consulate General in Chennai, India, 15 consulate employees, family members and Locally Employed Staff joined 18 students from the local American International School and local NGO staff in series of environmental and hygiene-focused events to aid Narikuravar, a community about 40 kilometers outside of Chennai. The team worked on environmental clean-up, tree-planting and the painting of buildings housing the toilets it had earlier donated. Trees were planted at the homes of local residents, and consulate staff advised on how to ensure the trees' survival.



Embassy Caracas
Chargé d'Affaires Kelly
Keiderling, assisted
by embassy staffers,
plants the Anne
Smedinghoff Palm
Tree. Photo by Alexis
Rengel



Consulate General Chennai
General Services Officer Kris
Arvind instructs community
residents on safe hand-
washing practices. Photo by
Ramraj Doraiswamy

Virtual Interns Vie for Online Projects

More than 1,000 U.S. students logged on to USAjobs.gov in July hoping to become virtual eInterns with the Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS), an initiative of the Bureau of Information Resource Management's Office of eDiplomacy that, for the first time, also features projects posted by Broadcasting Board of Governors and the departments of Agriculture and Commerce. The list of available projects, which eInterns can work on online, also includes offerings from the Smithsonian Institution, Department of the Interior and Department of Education. Supervisors will interview and make their selections in August, and work will begin in September.

One of the projects involves bringing the U.S. Mission in Vietnam's public diplomacy programming to students in the nation's provinces through video editing and online posting of events. Another involves assisting five Foreign Service information technology specialists as they earn the Chief Information Officer's certificate, and yet another involves promoting cross-cultural awareness by recording web chats for Tajik students to watch at the American Corners in Tajikistan.



Marathon Memorial Runs Held

In April, Ambassador to Hungary Eleni Tsakopoulos Kounalakis joined her family, embassy community members and members of the Hungarian athletic community for a jog around the Margit Island running track to commemorate the victims of the Boston Marathon bombings. What began as a spontaneous Facebook initiative by local media personalities became an event that attracted hundreds, including Olympic water polo champions and trainers and Hungarian parliamentary sports officials. The U.S. Embassy in Budapest was represented by staff, spouses, Locally Employed Staff, babies in strollers and several dogs.

After a moment of silence, Ambassador Kounalakis placed a wreath on the Danube River in memory of those who lost their lives. Participants then set off at their own speed to walk, jog or run a 5.3-kilometer circuit of the island.



Meanwhile, at the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia, runners in Boston Marathon colors of blue and yellow participated in the embassy 5K Run for Boston in May in nearly 100-degree heat. The more than 50 participants, including Ambassador John Koenig and his wife, Natalie, walked, ran and biked together in support of the victims of the marathon bombings, and were encouraged along the route by members of the embassy's Marine Security Guard detachment. More than half of the embassy's staff turned out for the event, which "was our small way of doing something," said Kristina Parisi, one of the event's organizers.

Top: Budapest runners commemorate the Boston Marathon bombing victims. *Photo by Anita Tenk*
Left: Embassy Nicosia runners pause for a moment to reflect on the Boston tragedy. *Photo by U.S. Embassy Nicosia*

Embassy Team Helps Gain Snow Leopard Data

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan's radio shop and Engineering Security Office (ESO) last year helped the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and National Geographic Society (NGS) track endangered and poached snow leopards in northeast Afghanistan.

Frank Gigliotti, the embassy's radio chief, and Ken Carlsen, a radio tech detailed to Kabul's ESO, assisted WCS, whose radio tracking equipment hadn't arrived. WCS needed a backup for the homemade receiver its team found in Kabul and would use when tracking and trapping snow leopards in Pamir province.

Carlsen requested parameters from an Arizona tracking equipment vendor for radio-based trapping equipment, which would tell WCS when a leopard had been caught. He also engineered the radio receiving equipment with abandoned radios and antennas found by Gigliotti.

Within six hours of setting up the traps, a rapid chirping signal on the embassy-supplied radios, indicated the trap had been activated by a snow leopard. WCS researchers took measurements and samples of the leopard's blood and DNA. For the first time, they outfitted the snow leopard with a satellite tracking collar. They repeated the process after trapping a second snow leopard.

WCS Afghanistan Country Director David Lawson called the captures sensational and said WCS and NGS representatives told him there was no way they could have done this without the radio equipment loaned from the embassy.

EB Revises Website

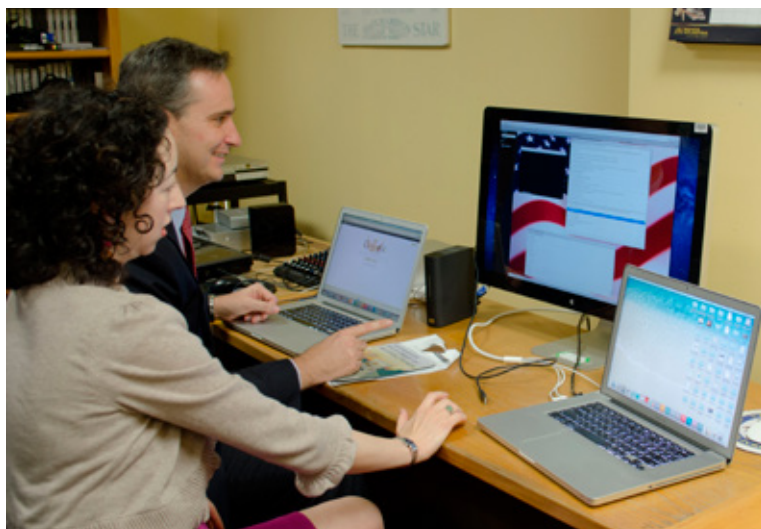
The Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs recently revamped its information portal on economic, energy and environmental topics, <http://www.econ.state.gov>, by adding new features to help users stay informed and promote collaboration. The revised site is organized by topic and region, and has a search function covering information from all bureaus under the Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment. The site has an index of key issues, updated portfolio lists and interactive features, including forums to share and discuss projects or ask a question of an economist.

NIV Section Does Live Online Outreach

Earlier this year, Foreign Service officers in the nonimmigrant visa (NIV) section of the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, launched a series of live online outreach events, in Spanish, on visa policies and the visa application process. The first event was an hour-long webcast, delivered via Adobe Connect, on how B1/B2 tourist visa applicants should prepare for the consular interview. The officers answered questions posed in real time and in advance via social media. Publicized in local newspapers and TV, the event attracted 256 viewers from 10 cities and towns in diverse parts of Honduras.

Since Tegucigalpa is a high-volume, high-visa-fraud post, the next outreach event, which enlisted the expertise of the assistant regional security officer-investigator team, was a web chat on "How to Avoid Being the Victim of a Scam." While a consular officer replied to visa questions, the investigators discussed participants' fraud concerns and recent visa fraud trends in Honduras, such as document package visa scams.

The NIV section's latest outreach effort, in June, was a webcast on "Applying for a Student Visa," broadcast via Adobe Connect. Consular officers told students which documents to prepare and which standard questions to expect during the interview. As an added bonus, the chat also featured Honduras' EducationUSA student advisor, who spoke about her free advising services and promoted U.S. study and scholarship opportunities.



From left, Consular Officers Vincent Mut-Tracy and Zennia D. Paganini consider materials for the webchat. Photo by Edwar Ramirez

Retirements

Foreign Service

Bedwell, John C.
Benjaminson, Eric David
Bowers, Leroy M.
Brajevich, Nikki May
Bullington, Charles Eugene
Burke, Daniel T.
Conn II, Delbert E.
Davis, Ernest E.
Eicher, Michael J.
Feller, Scarlet Diane
Fiala, Timothy J.
Gallo, Carol E.
Gerou, Gregory Stephen
Goodrich, Robert E.
Gray, Mary A.
Guimond, Paula P.
Gustavus, Christopher H.
Harsha, Stanley
Hartley, Linda J.
Heater, Robert D.
Hilton, Olivia P.L.
Houck, Susan J.
Hylton, William D.
Ioannou, Madeleine Bennett
Junk, John L.
Kaczmarek, Michalene F.
Kash, Lesley
Kervin, Paul D.

Laurance, Peggy D.
Lemarie, James D.
Lienhart, Theodore M.
Limeri, Patricia R.
Lutz, Gerald L.
Lyman, Thomas A.
MacDonald, Nora Susan
Madrid, Sarah O.
Malone, Thomas L.
McCarter-Sheehan, Mary A.
McShane, Christopher
Myles, Marianne M.
Ragsdale, Marguerita D.
Ranger, Maria E.
Richards, Michael A.
Root, John J.
Rumbarger, Dale L.
Sears, Tim Allan
Seche, Stephen A.
Slaven, Daniel Eugene
Stewart, William R.
Stocking, Thomas E.
Stone, David L.
Welker, Robin J.
White, Thomas J.
Williams, Phylliss D.
Wittmann, Christopher E.
Zalewski, Dianne Dupre

Civil Service

Appleton, John T.
Beffel, Susan Jane
Belcher, Marion Tamara
Bordley, Donna Scali
Boston, Jimmie J.
Charles, Barbara E.
Colon, Jane Marie
Crawford, Francine M.
De Leon, Juan Francisco
Diedrich, Jane E.
Dunham, David B.
Engh, Charles F.
Feldmann, John R.
Felipe, Elpidio V.
Fink, Christopher D.
Fournier, Nancy L.
Hahn, Luisa M.
Hamilton, Perry C.
Holman, Beverly S. Willis

Imre, Guliz
Jaliwala, Firoz A.
Lloyd, Robert Earl
Loken, Keith
London, David W.
MacLean, Margaret G.
Mantzaris, Charlotte
Mattox, Robert W.
McCarty, Susan L.
Morgan, Valerie M.
O'Brien, Roger F.
Pickerign, Larry M.
Stefanka, Rosemary
Stover, Deborah L.
Tice, Denzil R.
Turner, Lynn M.
Whiteside, Ruth Ann
X-Ortiz, Imani M.
Zehler, Edward J.

Mandatory but not Mundane

Civil Service Orientation Course Gets Redesign

By Gaia Hart, Civil Service Orientation program coordinator, Foreign Service Institute

The Foreign Service Institute's week-long Civil Service Orientation course (PN127) is mandatory for all permanent new-hire employees, but mandatory does not mean mundane. "From the second I walked through the door, I was pleasantly surprised," said Nadine Zaatar, a program specialist in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. "There are a million and one great things I could say about the course."

Many other attendees have expressed similar sentiments, indicating that the significant course redesign this year was worth the effort.

The program, which welcomes 60 to 65 students monthly and helps them transition into the Department, retains core topics such as Human Resources Basics, Employee Assistance, Work-Life Balance, FSI Training Opportunities, DOS Mission and Structure, and Career Development as a solid foundation.

Despite the course's successful record, the Civil Service Orientation team of Gaia Hart and Shamika Williams, led by Orientation Division Director Elise Kleinwaks, began renovating the course to better serve the changing needs of the Department and its Civil Service employees. After consulting presenters and current and former students, analyzing survey results and reviewing 33 course modules, they redesigned 43 percent of the course, including nine additional segments involving exercises in topics such as Presentation Skills; Managing Up, Down and All Around; and Interagency Insights. FSI Training Technician Lori Figueroa gave the course a good review: "The interactive nature of many of the modules kept me engaged and helped us better interact. The daily rearranging of seating to create more networking and engagement with new colleagues was very helpful. The facilitators had high energy, were open and personable, and brought a sense of fun and overall positive interaction."

Committed to instilling the "one team" concept in new hires, the team revamped the usual panel discussion into a small-group fireside chat called Ask the FSO, in which the class divides



into separate rooms with a Foreign Service officer for informal and candid conversations about working together to further the overall Department mission. Amy Kara, a contract specialist in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, said, "The course was an eye-opener with a lot of information and resources I didn't know existed, and it's a great way to meet others outside of my bureau."

Civil Service Orientation also teaches participants the interpersonal skills they need to succeed. It offers the popular Myers-Briggs Type Indicator teamwork and leadership tool, plus new segments on emotional intelligence, temperament styles, situational leadership, team dynamics, conflict management and the Department's writing style and clearance processes.

In keeping with the Orientation Division's philosophy that a confident and satisfied individual will become a strong and effective professional, these segments are designed to assist students in their personal lives as well as their work. "At an individual level, the orientation provided me with a bigger picture of my own role within DOS and ways in which I can better myself and my further career path within the Department," said Emily Brown, a case assistant in the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

"It was an informative and fun-filled week," said Christina Breuer, a Multilateral Outreach officer in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs. "I thoroughly enjoyed it and learned about some incredibly valuable resources. I'm regularly in touch with some new colleagues and friends I made during orientation."

As with any remodeling project, there is always something that needs refining. The Civil Service Orientation team welcomes ideas to improve the course design. ■

EMBASSY ICKYSTAN CLASSIFIEDS

GENTLY USED DENTAL FLOSS - 20 ICKY LUKERS PER 500-YARD ROLL. CONTACT MAGELLAN FINNIKRISP IN ECON.



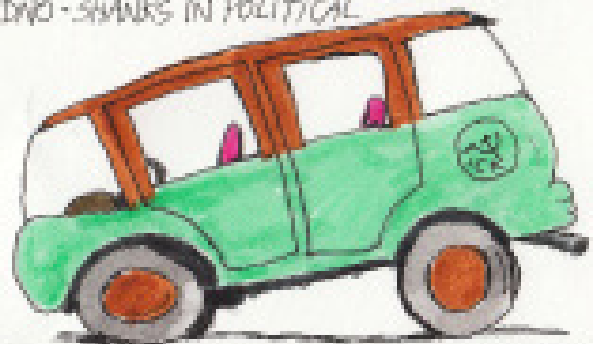
UPTIGHT AUTHORITIES AT MY NEXT POST WON'T LET ME BRING THEM, SO FREE TO A GOOD HOME TWO CUDDLY MANATEES - WITH MANATEE CHOW AND CARRIERS. CONTACT MELITA KAVIPS IN CONSULAR.



ICKYSTANESE LANGUAGE BOOK, DVD AND BEGINNER GUIDE TO HAND GESTURES, SLIGHTLY DAMAGED BY TEARS OF BITTER FRUSTRATION AND DESPAIR - CONTACT MORT MANDIBLE IN CONSULAR.



1998 ICKY MOTORS BRAND SOCIALIST UTILITY VEHICLE - FORWARD-LEANING RIDE, BUT ROBUST REPAIR OF SHOCKS COULD FIX THAT, AND MINOR ADJUSTMENTS COULD ENABLE IT TO RUN ON GASOLINE INSTEAD OF IGUANA BILE - CALL DANIELLE CHUDNO - SHARKS IN POLITICAL.



August 2018

DON'T LET 2002 EXPIRATION DATE SCARE YOU OFF - NOTHING IN THIS INSTANT PUDDING IS NATURAL ENOUGH TO GO BAD! VINTAGE FEETPS ALSO FOR SALE - BEST OFFER TO TIA ZABUMBA IN RSO.



COLORFUL TRADITIONAL COSTUME FROM A PREVIOUS POSTING - WHO CAN REMEMBER WHICH WAS WHICH? BUT IT'S GOT IT ALL - FUNNY SHOES, IMPOSSIBLE HAT. STAIN ON PANTALOONS MAY BE YAK BLOOD - OH MOTHER OF FEARS, THERE'S A STORY YOU DO NOT WANT TO HEAR. ALSO, HALF A GALLON OF VODKA - MARY IN REGIONAL LINEDANCING AFFAIRS.



Obituaries



Thomas E. Bower, 94, retired chief of audio-visual services for the Foreign Service Institute, died Feb. 19 in Lake Ridge, Va. He served in the Navy during World War II, and worked for the Navy Department and State Department until retiring in 1976. He was active in his church and enjoyed spending time with his family, building furniture, painting and managing the family farms.

Seymour "Sy" Chalfin, 94, a retired Foreign Service officer, died April 24 of dementia in Ellicott City, Md. He served in the Army during World War II. After working in the Labor Department's international programs for eight years, he joined the Foreign Service in 1957 and was assigned to Ghana as the first labor attaché in postcolonial Africa. His subsequent posts were Nairobi, Paris, Ottawa and Stockholm. He retired in 1977. He enjoyed reading and a daily quota of exercise.



William B. Hussey, 97, a retired Foreign Service officer, died May 25 in Laguna Hills, Calif. He served in the Navy during World War II, entered the Foreign Service in 1949 and was posted to England, Germany, Burma, Thailand, Togo, Malawi, Lesotho and Mauritius. After retiring in 1969, he worked for the U.N. and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, and was a foreign affairs consultant for Fortune 500 companies. He promoted tennis programs for youth in Asia, Africa and the South Pacific, and was named Super Senior Tennis International Sportsman of the Year in 2012.



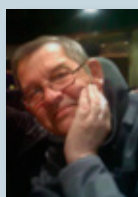
Gary P. Keith, 54, a Foreign Service officer, died May 10 of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis in Arlington, Va. His postings included Santiago, Santo Domingo, The Hague, Bangkok, Bogotá, Managua and San Jose. Before joining the Foreign Service, he arranged educational exchange programs at Meridian House International and worked in refugee camps in Thailand and Cambodia.



John J. Kenney, 92, a retired Foreign Service staff officer and World War II veteran, died May 21, 2012, in San Antonio, Texas. He joined the Foreign Service in 1950 and served in Germany, Mexico, Venezuela, Egypt, Paraguay, Brazil and Israel. After retiring in 1970, he enjoyed traveling, reading and sharing his Kodachrome slide collection with family and friends.



E. Parks Olmon, 81, a retired Foreign Service officer, died April 19 in Denton, Texas. He entered the Foreign Service in 1959 as a diplomatic courier and retired in 1989 as executive director of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. His other postings included Mexico, Haiti, Belgium and China. He consulted on the opening of U.S. embassies in Albania and Bratislava in the early 1990s. He later served in Skopje and Reykjavik, and authored the Department's "China 2000" document.



Leslie D. Oly, 58, a Foreign Service information management officer, died May 6 at his home in Falls Church, Va. He served in the Coast Guard and joined the Department in 1977, but resigned soon thereafter to take care of his parents. He returned to the Department in 1986. His postings included Karachi, Jakarta, São Paulo, Ottawa, Bangui, Yaoundé, Tel Aviv and Vienna. He loved cooking, history and world affairs, and couldn't resist adopting kittens and other animals.



Robert E. Park, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer, died April 11 at his home in Palo Alto, Calif. He served in the Navy during World War II and joined the Department in 1952. He served in Venezuela, Israel, Iran, Ghana, Turkey, the Dominican Republic, Austria, Nigeria, Burma and Yugoslavia, and on the faculty at the Foreign Service Institute. He retired to Palo Alto in 1985.

Patsy Jane Patten, 64, a retired Department contracting officer, died April 19 at her home in Annandale, Va. She worked at the Department for more than 30 years in various positions before retiring in 2008. She was a gifted artist, and devoted herself to helping homeless cats and wildlife in her neighborhood.



Michael M. Pingree, 69, a retired Foreign Service communications officer, died August 26, 2012, from myelofibrosis. He lived in St. Petersburg, Fla. He served in the Air Force before joining the Department. His postings included Malta, Algeria, Spain, China and Belgium. He worked in more than 114 countries. After retiring, he enjoyed traveling to Asia and reading.



Robert Lee Pugh, 81, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Jan. 28 of Parkinson's disease in Columbus, Miss. He served in the Marine Corps before joining the Department in 1961. He was ambassador to Mauritania and Chad, and also served in Turkey, Iran, Greece and Lebanon. He received an Award for Valor for his service in Beirut when the embassy and Marine barracks were bombed. He retired to Columbus in 1993, where he was president of the local Humane Society and adopted many cats and dogs.



Herbert Romerstein, 81, a retired Civil Service employee, died May 7 in Rockville, Md., following a stroke. He lived in Clinton, Md. He worked for the U.S. government for 25 years, lastly as head of the Office to Counter Soviet Disinformation at the U.S. Information Agency from 1983 to 1989. Before that, he was a staff member for the U.S. House of Representatives. After retiring, he did extensive research in U.S. and foreign archives and wrote several books, mostly dealing with the Soviet Union.



Jean (Michiko) Sera, 88, a retired Foreign Service employee, died April 15 in Albuquerque, N.M. She served in Okinawa, Beirut, Karachi, Paris, Valletta, Guangzhou and Osaka. She was known for her kindness, spirit of adventure and appreciation of all cultures.



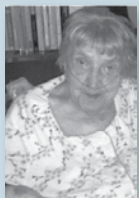
Harold L. Skean Jr., 94, a retired Civil Service employee, died April 22 in Arlington, Va. He joined the Department in 1941, left to serve in the Army during World War II and returned to the Department after the war to work in the Executive Secretariat under five Secretaries of State from John Foster Dulles to Henry Kissinger. He retired in 1973. He was active in his church and community and was an avid reader.



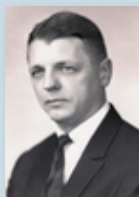
Richard Henry Smyth, 62, a retired Foreign Service officer, died May 27 at his home in Carlisle, Pa., after a long struggle with cancer. He served in the Peace Corps in Afghanistan before joining the Department in 1979. His postings included Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Indonesia, Denmark, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Jamaica and the Army War College. He was renowned for his storytelling ability and quick wit.



Anna M. Stevens, 67, widow of retired Foreign Service officer Lynn E. Stevens, died May 30 in Bradenton, Fla. She accompanied her husband on assignments to Austria, Bolivia, Belgium, Lesotho, South Africa, Mexico, Guinea-Bissau, Japan and Barbados. She often worked as a community liaison officer/administrative assistant or for USAID. She enjoyed knitting, crafts and going to the beach.



Felicia C. Tanona, 95, a retired Foreign Service employee, died Nov. 30 at her home in Worcester, Mass. During her more than 25 years with the Foreign Service, she was posted to Cairo, Palermo, Florence, Rome and Leningrad. She enjoyed traveling, reading, opera and taking courses at a local college.



John A.F. Ulinski Jr., 89, a retired USAID officer, died April 30. He lived in Hendersonville, N.C. After serving in the Air Force during World War II, he worked on the Point Four program and for the U.S. foreign assistance mission in Indonesia. He then worked for the Development Loan Fund which merged into USAID. He served in India, Vietnam and Liberia. After retiring in 1980, he became a development consultant and worked with YMCA programs in Africa, Asia and Latin America. He loved literature, music, baseball, birding and fine food. ■

Questions concerning employee deaths should be directed to the Office of Casualty Assistance at (202) 736-4302. Inquiries concerning deaths of retired employees should be directed to the Office of Retirement at (202) 261-8960. For specific questions on submitting an obituary, please contact Bill Palmer at palmerwr2@state.gov or (202) 203-7114. ■

End State



Ireland

Muted sunlight filters through an overcast sky, lending warmth to a line of weathered fence posts that separate rolling pasture from a hillside road.

Photo by Francesca Guadagnini

PG. 6





Germany

Candles lit by visitors and parishioners brighten the entryway of Frankfurt's historic Imperial Cathedral. The site has been home to numerous small churches since A.D. 680, and in A.D. 1150 work began on a portion of what is today the main structure.

PG. 30

Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco



Kyrgyzstan

Tourists' backpacks rest near the vibrant red and teal door of a yurt at Tash-Rabat yurt camp in southeastern Kyrgyzstan near Torugart Pass, which crosses from Kyrgyzstan into China.

Photo by Urbangarden



PG. 10

Learn more about Creative Commons online at creativecommons.org



India

As dusk settles over a beachside community in Kerala's Alappuzha district on a warm late-spring evening, an ice cream vendor doles out a sweet treat for an eager customer.

Photo by Vinoth Chandar

PG. 5





U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Human Resources
Washington, DC 20520

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ISSN 1099-4165

If address is incorrect,
please indicate change.
Do not cover or destroy
this address.

POSTMASTER:

Send changes of address to:

State Magazine
Department of State
SA-44, Room 348
Washington, DC 20547-4403



Help Feed Hungry Families!

feds **feed** families

The Feds Feed Families food drive runs through the end of August, gathering food for needy families in the Washington, D.C.-area. Please bring nonperishable food items to the marked donation boxes in the Department's D.C.-area facilities. More information is at FedsFeedFamilies.gov or by email at FedsFeedFamilies@state.gov



Follow the campaign on Facebook and @FedFoodDrive

